



# RECOVERING JOHN TALBOT

*Cynthia McFarland*



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*The Unknown Life of America's First Bishop*

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## *Contents*

Introduction	11
The beginnings	14
Thomas Talbot and Dr Clere Talbot: the paths of the law	17
Clere Talbot: from merchant taylor to minister	22
The confusion of John Talbots	25
John Talbot of New Jersey: childhood and early years	28
Cambridge and ordination	32
Chaplaincy, Virginia, and Gloucestershire	35
<i>HMS Centurion</i> : a happy coincidence	41
A return to England, a petition for a bishop	48
Party, piety, and politics: 1708 to 1720	51
‘In the snare of the Hunter’	62
Another return to England, another petition for a bishop	78
A bishop for America: nonjuring consecration	84
Who knew what, when?	88
The noose tightens	100
The end of the mystery—and the mystery at the end	108
A bishop for America: reprise	115
John Talbot: the take away	118
Appendix 1: The genealogy of John Talbot	120
Appendix 2: The received biography of John Talbot	122
Appendix 3: Letters of John Talbot, 25 August and 7 September 1713	124

*Go on reading until you can hear people talking.*  
— G. M. Young (1882–1959)

*Preface*

John Talbot is a reasonably familiar name within the Episcopal Church in New Jersey, but probably few people, outside professional historians, could say much about him. In 2005, as a resident of Burlington, New Jersey and a staff member of the Diocese of New Jersey, I had greater knowledge of Talbot than many, but I accepted at face value his traditional biography. His story was a romantic one with mysterious elements—and one that perhaps deserved a closer look—but my scholarly interests were centred on the early nineteenth-century American Episcopal Church, not the late seventeenth-century Church of England. Not until the correspondence of an amateur genealogist in Wales was brought to my attention did I turn seriously to Talbot.

Rhys Williams contacted St Mary's Church in Burlington and the Diocese of New Jersey in Trenton from 1999 through 2001 about John Talbot, sending polite but persistent letters and faxes that were accompanied by typewritten and hand-drawn charts and paragraphs photocopied from various sources, interspersed here and there with quotations from Shakespeare. Mr Williams argued that the traditional biography of Talbot of New Jersey had been confused with other John Talbots, but his letters and documents were just odd enough that I dismissed him as a well-meaning but doddering amateur genealogist with a bit of an obsession. Once, however, I checked a few of his notes about various Talbot family members and looked up some of his sources, I realised that his investigation was solid and that the leads he provided were good ones indeed. The clues in his family research opened the way for this monograph.

In my effort to trace Rhys Williams when I was working on this monograph, I discovered, sadly, that he had likely died not long after he last wrote in 2001, so it was impossible to inform him of the debt I owe him.

At various times over many years I have been assisted by the staff of the Norfolk Record Office, the Gloucestershire Record Office, the British Library, the Lambeth Palace Library, and the Office of the Register of Wills in the city of Philadelphia.

Fiona Colbert, the archivist of St John's College, Cambridge University, was immensely helpful in fielding innumerable queries about John Talbot's

mysteriously undocumented educational career. Dr Jacqueline Cox, Deputy Keeper of the University Archives, Cambridge University, provided additional assistance with the question of Talbot's degree status. Lucy McCann, archivist at the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House, was of great help with transcribing information from the calendars of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Through the years, the Reverend J. Connor Haynes, rector of St Mary's Church, Burlington, New Jersey has engaged in numerous conversations about John Talbot.

Finally, I am indebted to the patience of friends and colleagues who have heard more than they might have wished about this fascinating man who has been my close companion for some six years.

*Cynthia McFarland  
The South Canonry  
Burlington, New Jersey  
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*A note on dating and orthography*

Until 1752, England maintained its loyalty to the Julian calendar, which marked the beginning of a new year on 25 March. Most of the continent, however, by the end of the seventeenth century had adopted the Gregorian calendar, which began the year on 1 January. To deal with this, English letter writers often used notation of, for example, 1720/21, for the last quarter of the year (January through 25 March) or, in modern reckoning, the first quarter of the new year. I have kept that convention throughout this monograph.

Occasionally there will be some uncertainty of the year of a letter, if a person writing in January, February, or before 25 March neglected to include it. Usually internal evidence allows a reasonable guess.

Quarter days loom large in the Julian calendar and were often used as day for payment of wages; correspondence frequently includes references to them. Those days were: 25 March (The Annunciation, 'Lady Day', 'Ladyday' or in usage 'Our Lady past'); 24 June (Nativity of St John the Baptist); 29 September (St Michael and All Angels, Michaelmas, sometimes 'Michael'); and 25 December (The Nativity of Our Saviour or Christmas)

In letters and documents transcribed within the text, the erratic seventeenth- and eighteenth-century orthography has been left strictly alone, but lengthy letters have been broken into paragraphs for ease of reading.

*Abbreviations*

TNA	<i>The National Archives (UK)</i>
NRO	<i>Norfolk Record Office</i>
GRO	<i>Gloucestershire Record Office</i>
CCed	<i>The Clergy of the Church of England Database</i>

## *Introduction*

**T**he Reverend John Talbot, one of the earliest and best-known missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, has always been something of a mystery and, in no small part, an Anglican superhero. The received biography has Talbot serving as a chaplain in the Royal Navy in 1702 who, at the startling age of 57, quixotically seeks permission from the SPG to join his shipmate Reverend George Keith in his survey of—and mission to—the few Anglican clusters in America. This was an astounding change of vocational inclination for a supposed fellow of Peterhouse College, Cambridge. Further, Talbot's embrace of a primitive existence in the American wilderness is heroic and puzzling, since he left behind a life of apparent privilege, his maternal grandfather being traditionally identified as Sir John Mede, a wealthy landowner in Essex.

Once in America, Keith and Talbot embark on a lengthy journey on the eastern seaboard, from New Hampshire to North Carolina, fighting bad roads, difficult weather, and dissenters alike with unflagging energy. That missionary tour ending, Talbot asked to be settled permanently by the SPG in the 'plantations', and in 1703 is appointed resident missionary to the parish of Burlington, New Jersey.

Despite being in the middle of his sixth decade by biographical tradition, he continues his frequent travels to parishes from New York to Delaware to supply for absent or missing clergy. The Quakers—for whom Talbot had little love, which was returned in kind—were delighted when his horse dropped dead under him.

This enigmatic man, the apparent scholar and scion of the landed gentry who gave himself over at an advanced age to years of hard duty in America, has proved alluring to scholars through the years.

Adding to the fascination is Talbot's reputed consecration as a bishop in the nonjuring line in 1722. As tradition presumes that Talbot was then 77 years old, his consecration has been portrayed as the vagary of an elderly and possibly failing cleric, an odd but somewhat justifiable act agreed to after years of relentlessly unsuccessful pleading for a bishop for America.

At 1727, again by tradition at least 82 years old, Talbot dies quietly in Burlington, New Jersey, survived by a widow whom he married late in his life.

As compelling as this John Talbot is, he is in large part a fiction. The facts of his purported lineage are confused and incorrect. His birth year and education are wrong. His family background is that of other Talbots.

Recovering John Talbot's background required access to wills, real property deeds, and records of ordination, appointment, collation, and institution. This has been made possible through the advent of online catalogues of county Public Record Offices, the National Archives (UK), and *The Clergy of the Church of England Database* (which documents, through primary sources, the careers of all Church of England clergymen between 1540 and 1835). In earlier centuries, this sort of crosschecking of primary sources would have been virtually impossible.

Where possible, I have made use of original sources or images of original sources rather than relying on transcriptions. There are many inaccuracies in the early nineteenth-century transcriptions of American correspondence of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), and those carried down to the printed collections of that correspondence.

To complicate matters further, the two principal repositories of original SPG correspondence and documents—Lambeth Palace Library and Rhodes Library (part of the Bodleian Library at Oxford)—contain vast amounts of overlapping material, but each also has some material the other doesn't. And even more tiresomely, the numbering schemes used by each differ, making cross-checking sources between those two repositories tedious. Happily, since I began work on this monograph some six years ago, the SPG American material is now online (the A, B, and C series, as well as the SPG journals, appen-



Figure 1 Elizabeth Kempe Buxton

dices, and reports) as digitized images produced from the original microfilm.<sup>1</sup> A scholar can now work with the actual documents instead of transcriptions. The images are made available by British Online Archives (<http://britishon-linearchives.co.uk>).

One cannot blame earlier historians for mistakes they likely would not have made, had they access to the relevant sources. But one can fault them for being wilfully blind in the face of the facts they had. It doesn't take much deep reading of material that was available to earlier Talbot scholars—Venn's *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, dates of parochial tenures, published dates of births, marriages, and deaths—to see that there was something quite amiss with Talbot's received biography. But historian after historian overlooked the chronological and factual contradictions.

Similarly, despite the quite large body of evidence for Talbot's having been consecrated in the nonjuring succession, some historians seemed unable to entertain the idea and developed peculiarly baroque arguments to support their position.

Clearing away the fog from John Talbot could only be done by returning to primary sources. As this monograph depends so entirely upon them, a thicket of footnotes grows at the bottom of nearly all the pages. In addition to these functional footnotes, there are a few others almost Victorian in length. They are, preposterously enough, the most interesting ones.

John Talbot's surviving outgoing correspondence is virtually all addressed to the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel or the Bishop of London (with a few fugitive letters to friends and a small collection to George Keith). All are found in the SPG collections, with a few instances in the Fulham Papers. Outside of those collections, three letters from John Talbot to Robert Nelson, written in 1713, exist and are remarkable survivals, as there is no large corpus of Nelson's papers. Two of those three letters are in Burlington, New Jersey, in the archives of St Mary's Church; the third letter, once a part of that archives, appears to have been lost.

Talbot's incoming correspondence—those letters not discarded by him after they were read—was likely destroyed by the Reverend Edward Vaughan in

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<sup>1</sup> The microfilm was produced from the collection of SPG letters, reports, minutes, appendices, and related material at the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House at Oxford University, not the SPG collection at the Lambeth Palace Library.

Elizabeth, New Jersey, executor of Talbot's papers after his death. Other than official SPG correspondence to Talbot (copies of which survive in the SPG collections), there are no extant incoming letters.

Despite the fact that virtually all Talbot's letters are 'official correspondence', his remarkable personality comes through them. Writing in a rigidly formal age, Talbot naturally observed conventional salutations and valedictions in his letters, but in between, he wrote with piquancy and punch. Having spent the better part of five years with him (and them), I am most grateful for that.

## *The beginnings*

**T**he Talbots<sup>2</sup> of Wymondham were a prominent Norfolk family<sup>3</sup> who rose to power during the reign of Elizabeth I. The first to settle in Norfolk was likely Thomas Talbot, a merchant. But it was his son, Thomas Talbot—the great-grandfather of John Talbot of New Jersey—who established the family name and fortune. Born in 1556, he was a graduate of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, taking his LLB in 1581. Shortly afterwards, he bought Gonville<sup>4</sup> Manor in Wymondham from Sir Edward Clere, who was very probably a relative by marriage. (Clere becomes prominent as a Christian name in the Talbot family from the 1580s.)

Awarded a patent by Elizabeth I in 1584<sup>5</sup> Thomas Talbot began his rise in legal circles. In 1588 the archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, granted him an LLD and in February 1590, Thomas Talbot LLD<sup>6</sup> was appointed to the College of Advocates.<sup>7</sup> By 1592 he was a judge in the vice-admiral's court and a jp by

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<sup>2</sup> This monograph uses the single 't' spelling of Talbot; both versions are found in the family lineage.

<sup>3</sup> *The visitations of Norfolk 1563, 1589, and 1613*, ed. Water Rye (Harleian Record Society, Vol. 32), London 1891. The Norfolk Talbots were likely a branch of a Yorkshire family.

<sup>4</sup> Also spelt Gunville, Gunvil[], or Gonvil. Originally known as Milliers Hall from its thirteenth-century origins, by 1880 it was described as 'a farmhouse in the Elizabethan style' in The post office directory of the counties of Cambridge, Norfolk and Suffolk, London 1879. A small part of the original house survives. In *Norfolk 2: Northwest and South* in 'The Buildings of England' series (New Haven 2002) Nicholas Pevsner states that Talbot bought the manor from Clere in 1599, but cites no source for the assertion.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Blomefield, *An essay towards a topographical history of the county of Norfolk: volume II*, London 1805, describes the Talbot coat of arms: Arg. a chevron gul. between three talbots passant sab. Crest, a swan's head and neck, arg. winged and collared with a ducal crown or.

<sup>6</sup> So styled hereafter to differentiate him from the many Thomas Talbots to come.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Talbott, Appointment Record 236559, *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835* (hereafter cited as CCEd), <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 19 August 2009. The appointment was made by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, an uncompromising high-church prelate whose distaste for Puritans and dissenters was often enforced by legal prohibitions that he was successful in obtaining.

1600.<sup>8</sup> In 1619, the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, appointed him commissary to the bishop of Norfolk<sup>9</sup>, a commissary at that time being arguably the most powerful lay position in the church.

Thomas Talbot married three times. His first wife, Katharine Haste, was from an old Norfolk family noted in the *Visitation Books of Norfolk of 1563, 1589, and 1613*. Although she has slipped unnoticed from any contemporary history, the marriage brought together two well-known families, both of the landed gentry and both with connections to court. They had four sons:<sup>10</sup> Thomas [Jnr], born circa 1585; Henry, born circa 1587; Clere, born circa 1590; and Peter, born between 1592 and 1599; and two daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret, whose birth dates are unknown.

After Katharine's death in 1599, Thomas Talbot LLD married Elizabeth Kempe Buxton, a widow connected to two of the most powerful families in East Anglia. The Kempes owned six manors in Norfolk and Suffolk and Elizabeth was born at Gissing Hall in Roydon, a later manorial acquisition.<sup>11</sup> Channonz Hall near Tibenham, built in 1560, was that family's home for the next 200 years. One of her nephews was a gentleman of the Privy Chamber to Charles I; other nephews and great-nephews were early emigrants to Virginia.<sup>12</sup> These connections become important later to John Talbot of New Jersey.

Elizabeth Kempe Buxton had three surviving children from her first marriage when she married Thomas Talbot LLD, two boys and a girl, but the boys were both dead before age 25.<sup>13</sup> The Talbot second marriage produced no children.

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8 *Country and City: Wymondham, Norwich, and Eaton in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (The Wymondham Town Book 1585–1620, Ordinances of the Norwich Carpenters' Company 1594 and 1684, and John Aldrich of Eaton Farm Accounts 1663–1667), Norfolk Record Society 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Talbot, Appointment Record 230693, CCED, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009.

<sup>10</sup> The reader is urged to keep the Talbot genealogical chart found in Appendix 1 close to hand.

<sup>11</sup> Frederick Hitchin-Kemp, *A general history of the Kemp and Kempe families of Great Britain and her colonies*, London 1902.

<sup>12</sup> Hitchin-Kemp, *A general history*. Richard Kempe served as secretary of Virginia in 1634 and acting governor in 1644–45.

<sup>13</sup> The daughter, Margaret Buxton, would marry Clere Talbot, the son of Thomas Talbot LLD and Katharine Hast[e], Elizabeth Kempe Talbot's stepson.

That the extended Kempe family became close to Thomas Talbot's own children is suggested by the last will and testament of Dorothy Harris Kempe, Thomas Talbot's sister-in-law, who left five pounds to Dorothy Talbott, a granddaughter of Thomas Talbot by his first wife and no blood relation to her.<sup>14</sup>

Having outlived two wives, Thomas Talbot married a third time, to Susanna Tollemache D'Oyley, of another distinguished family; they had no children. She died on 2 April 1627 and Thomas Talbot LL.D died in December 1628, in Wymondham. Both were buried at Wymondham Abbey.

At his death Thomas Talbot LL.D had amassed land, property, and connections. His last will and testament,<sup>15</sup> probated in December 1628, divided his extensive properties amongst his four sons, following the classical formula of primogeniture. He ensured that his daughters were cared for and provided with a home until they married. Somewhat unusually, he made Clere, his third son, executor.

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<sup>14</sup> Lothrop Withington, 'Virginia Gleanings In England: abstracts of 17th and 18th century English wills and administrations relating to Virginia and Virginians,' a consolidation of articles from the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Baltimore 1980 (reprint), 321-325

<sup>15</sup> TNA/PRO/Prob/11/153; Will of Thomas Talbott LL.D



## *Thomas Talbot and Dr Clere Talbot: the paths of the law*

**T**homas Talbot [Junior],<sup>16</sup> born in 1585 in Wymondham and Clere Talbot, born five years later,<sup>17</sup> are significant ancestors in the story of John Talbot of New Jersey; the other two Talbot-Haste sons, Peter and Henry, bear little on the narrative.

Thomas Jnr and Clere entered the legal profession, both matriculating at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Thomas in 1601 and Clere in 1608.<sup>18</sup>

Thomas Jnr was admitted at Lincoln's Inn choosing the common law, was called to the Bar in 1612. He was of Norfolk and a minor crown but there is no further preference—he married Anne landed family from Norfolk.



Figure 2: Clere Talbot's memorial at Dunstan Parish Church (detail)

admitted 1695/5 and, practice of law was called to the Bar as escheator of Suffolk,<sup>19</sup> appointment, evidence of merit. In 1616, Herne, of a Tibenham,

distinguish him

Part Three, ed. Moore in Norfolk and Norwich

<sup>16</sup> So designated to from his father.

<sup>17</sup> *Norfolk Pedigrees*, Patrick Palgrave-Genealogy, Norfolk Genealogical Society 1981, 188. There are errors in the Talbot tree (it shows Thomas and Clere as half-brothers, when in fact they were both born of Katharine Haste), but the general dates and places are correct.

<sup>18</sup> *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900*, John Venn and J.A. Venn, comp. 'Part 1: From the Earliest Times to 1751,' Vol. iv, London 1927. All further educational achievements of Thomas and Clere noted are found in Venn.

<sup>19</sup> Wilfrid R. Prest, *The Rise of the Barristers: a social history of the English bar, 1590–1640* in ed. Keith Thomas, *Oxford Studies in Social History*, Oxford 1986, 394.

Clere Talbot took his LLB from Trinity Hall in 1614 and chose to practice civil law, which bound his professional rise to the patronage of the crown. He was admitted to the Court of Arches on 13 October 1620, designated master in chancery extraordinary in 1628,<sup>20</sup> and in 1636 appointed steward of Great Yarmouth.<sup>21</sup>

In 1619, Dr Clere Talbot<sup>22</sup> married Margaret Buxton,<sup>23</sup> his stepmother Elizabeth Kempe [Buxton] Talbot's daughter, with whom he would have presumably spent much of his youth. They had four children who lived beyond infancy: Thomas Talbot [IIIA] born 1620; Dorothy Talbot, born 1623; Margaret Talbot, born 1625; and Clere Talbot (the father of John Talbot of New Jersey), born 1629/30.

After being admitted to the Court of Arches in 1620, Dr Clere Talbot could append *Esquire* to his name, but as it was not a heritable title, to ensure a continuation of status for his children, he began the time-honoured tradition of acquiring estates and property. Surviving records<sup>24</sup> indicate that he continued a pattern of land purchases throughout the 1640s and by 1654 possessed considerable holdings in Carleton Rode, Dunston, Tibenham, Bunwell, and Old Buckenham.

During that same decade that Charles was increasing his personal power, the strong royalist sympathies of the Talbot household became more apparent. Dr Clere Talbot's continuing service as commissary in the Diocese of Norwich would have occurred only with the agreement of Bishop Matthew Wren, a Laudian who had little patience with any opposition to high-church ideas. And the dedication to Dr Clere Talbot by John Yates in the strongly Laudian *Treatise of the Honor of God's House* suggests that Talbot's high-church credentials were impeccable.

<sup>20</sup> Brian Levack, *The Civil Lawyers in England, 1603-1641: a political study*, Oxford 1963, 274

<sup>21</sup> Charles John Palmer, *The History of Great Yarmouth, designed as a Continuation of Manship's History*, Great Yarmouth 1856, 361

<sup>22</sup> So designated to distinguish him from future Clere Talbots.

<sup>23</sup> Palgrave-Moore, *Norfolk Pedigrees*. Margaret Buxton Talbot died circa 1634, age 46. In 1635, Dr Clere Talbot married Ann[e] Harborne Sydnor, a widow with eight young daughters, but his second wife and stepchildren are peripheral to the main subject of this monograph, aside from noting that the pace of land and estate acquisition increased after this second marriage.

<sup>24</sup> Principally in the Norfolk Record Office.

In 1642, Dr Clere Talbot's oldest brother, Thomas Talbot Jnr, died, leaving a widow, Anne Herne Talbot, and two children, Anne and Thomas. Although the death of Thomas Talbot Jnr is a fact unremarkable in itself, his surviving son, Thomas Talbot III and his descendants add their own confusion to the Talbot genealogy.<sup>25</sup>

Dr Clere Talbot's own two sons, Thomas IIIA and Clere Jnr, were nine years apart in age and that age span made an enormous difference in the pattern of their lives. Thomas IIIA was educated in Norwich and matriculated at Gonville and Caius in 1636, when his younger brother Clere Jnr was six or seven. Thomas IIIA was a scholar of Trinity Hall, like his father, and choosing common rather than civil law, he was admitted at Gray's Inn on 9 February 1641/42.<sup>26</sup>

When Clere Talbot Jnr<sup>27</sup> was born in 1629, he was the last son and last child of a family of wealth, secure in its court connections and county status. Before he was five years old, his mother had died, but his father quickly remarried. His stepmother, Ann[e] Sydnor Harborne Talbot had a multiplicity of daughters from her first marriage, so Clere Jnr found himself with eight Harborne half-sisters, in addition to his own older blood brother and two sisters.

At the appropriate age to him to attend university, the country was embroiled in civil war. There is no record of Clere Jnr's ever matriculating at Cambridge. In 1646, unexpectedly for a Talbot son, he was sent to London to be bound as an apprentice merchant taylor to one John Bewley, a wealthy landowner with a manor in Kent and several London properties.<sup>28</sup> Clere Jnr lived in the

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<sup>25</sup> Already the proliferation of the name Thomas can be seen, with the attendant genealogical complexity. Thomas Talbot III is only important to the Talbot story as one of his children is John Talbot—later the Reverend John Talbot of Peterhouse—with whom John Talbot of New Jersey is traditionally confused. Various number and letter combinations are used to distinguish the Thomases and Cleres.

<sup>26</sup> Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, 'Thomas Talbot'

<sup>27</sup> Palgrave-Moore, *Norfolk Pedigrees*. So called to distinguish him from his father, Dr Clere Talbot. Later he will be referred to as the Reverend Clere Talbot, as he took holy orders.

<sup>28</sup> The Talbot family would have had numerous London connections, with Dr Clere Talbot's frequent attendance at law courts and his residence at Doctors Common. And Clere Talbot Jnr's stepmother, Ann[e] Sydnor Harborne Talbot, was the daughter of a founder of the Levant Company, Sir William Harborne. His name would have been well known in London merchant circles, as he later became Ambassador to Constantinople. Finding a place in London to ap-

parish of St Olave Hart Street during his apprenticeship and remained there throughout the Protectorate; he may well have been boarding with Bewley, a common practice for apprentices. It would have been a turbulent time for the son of a Royalist family to settle in London, just a year or so after the beheading of William Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, and with Charles I surrendering his troops in Scotland in May.

The same year Clere Jnr left for London, his brother Thomas IIIA married Abigail Sedley and his generous marriage settlement included Dr Clere Talbot's conveyance of Dunston Manor and lands in Carleton Rode, Bunwell, and Tibenham to his affianced son. It is idle to speculate whether Clere, far away in London as an apprentice, resented or accepted the inherent inequality in a system of primogeniture.

The times were bleak for the Talbot family. Dr Clere Talbot's place in society dimmed with the abolition of episcopacy in 1646 and disappeared at the death of Charles I in 1649. All his traditional sources of income gone and the Protectorate in power, the only additional appointment he received in 1651<sup>29</sup> was, quite ironically, as a deputy to the regicide William Heveningham,<sup>30</sup> who at that time was vice admiral for Suffolk.

Dr Clere Talbot had sold some properties and mortgaged others throughout the 1650s, but when he made his will on 31 March 1654,<sup>31</sup> he was fully aware that his estate would burden his children with massive financial obligations:

Whereas I stand indebted unto a number of persons in severall sommes of money, and being desirous out of the duty of a Christian, that every one should be paid their just and due debts [...]

His strategies for retiring his debts were complex and uncomfortable: the

prentice a younger son wouldn't have been a difficult matter.

<sup>29</sup> 'June 9, 1651 Council of State, Day's Proceedings. "The petition of Wm. Heveningham, Vice-Admiral for Suffolk, that Dr. Clere Talbot may be his deputy, and William Sheepley his registrar, referred to the Admiralty Committee to inform themselves whether these persons are fit to be entrusted with those employments, and report' in ed. Mary Ann Everett Green, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Commonwealth, 1651*, London, 1877, 241

<sup>30</sup> He didn't sign the king's death warrant, but he was part of the court that prosecuted him, all of whom are collectively known as regicides.

<sup>31</sup> TNA/PRO/Prob/11/238: Will of Clere Talbot

remaining years of a leasehold on his house within the cathedral close at Norwich were to be conveyed to his daughter Margaret Talbot Kempe only on the condition that her husband, George Kempe, forgive all the money that was owed to him by Dr Talbot and not charge the estate with the debts.

To Clere Jnr he left his principal properties in Wymondham (including the family's manor, Gonville Hall) and Thomas IIIA he charged with selling various other properties and copyholds to raise money to pay his debts. If those properties weren't sufficient to retire all the existing debts, Thomas IIIA, through rather tortuous legal language, was instructed to sell the properties in Wymondham that had been devised to Clere Jnr. The will brought no financial security to the sons and instead left them with a tangled estate and large debts.

Dr Clere Talbot is now remembered for the remarkable brass floor memorial of himself and his two wives in the Dunston parish church. Just how that singular monument was paid for—yet one more debt charged against an exiguous estate?—is unknown.

*Clere Talbot: from merchant taylor to minister*

A few months following his father's death, Clere Talbot Jnr was admitted as a freeman of the Merchant Taylors on 20 September 1654,<sup>32</sup> following a slightly more than seven years' apprenticeship. Thomas Talbot IIIA, Dr Clere Talbot's eldest son and now a successful barrister, continued to divest his father's vast holdings and in 1655, Clere Jnr signed a quitclaim deed to Dunston Manor, the largest of the family's properties.<sup>33</sup>

In 1657, at the age of 36, Thomas Talbot IIIA died, leaving his brother Clere Jnr—now a merchant in London—the only surviving son. Clere received a legacy of twenty pounds through his brother's will,<sup>34</sup> not a sum that would have allowed him to live comfortably without other sources of income.<sup>35</sup> With his brother's death, whatever debts and properties of his father's tangled estate that remained were now his to deal with alone.

On 13 February 1660/61 at St Olave Hart Street, Clere married Hannah Leigh,<sup>36</sup> one of three daughters of Charles Leigh, a London merchant and Merchant Taylor freeman. Their first child, Robert, born in December 1661, was puzzlingly baptized at St Bartholomew's Church, in Groton, Suffolk.<sup>37</sup> Groton was small parish best known for having been in the patronage of the puritan-leaning Winthrop family, early emigrants to North America. The rec-

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<sup>32</sup> *The Merchant Taylors Membership Index, 1530–1928*, source reference MF324, ID no. 30642, <http://www.merchanttaylors.net>. Clere Jnr's brother Thomas Talbot was married the same year Clere was sent to London.

<sup>33</sup> Norfolk Record Office, DUN 67/6, 106X3

<sup>34</sup> TNA/PRO/Prob11/275: Will of Thomas Talbott

<sup>35</sup> Thomas also left at least two surviving sons, referred to earlier, unhelpfully named Clere (1647–1684) and John (1657–1728). The latter, even more unhelpfully, takes holy orders and is one of the John Talbots whose biography is confused with John Talbot of New Jersey. See Appendix 1 for the Talbot genealogy.

<sup>36</sup> *Boyd's Marriage Index*: Cleare Talbot and Hannah Leigh, 1660, St Olave's Church, Hart Street, London; *Boyd's Inhabitants of London and Boyd's Family Units 1209–1948*: 'Charles Leigh [Lee], citizen and merchant taylor', record 25172

<sup>37</sup> Suffolk Record Office, Groton Parish Register 1561–1900, FL506/4/7–8

tor of the parish, William Kemp Leigh, was possibly related to both Clere and Hannah Talbot.<sup>38</sup>

Why the Talbots—or Hannah and baby Robert—would leave London in 1661 is unknown. But the family were soon back in the city, for a son Cle[a]re, was born there. Baptised at St Olave Hart Street on 30 June 1663, he died in April 1664, and was buried in the churchyard.<sup>39</sup> Another son, Edward, was born in December that same year, and survived.<sup>40</sup>

Sometime during 1664/5, Clere abandoned his career as a merchant and began studying privately for holy orders.<sup>41</sup> This surprising change of vocation may have led to displeasure in Hannah Leigh Talbot's family. She appears to have been disinherited, for there is no reference to her in her father's 1667 will.<sup>42</sup>

Whatever sources of income were available during Clere's study for the ministry must have been small. A surviving letter to his sister Margaret Talbot Kempe in Norwich, sent in 1667 from Dagnam [Dagenham],<sup>43</sup> Essex, suggests

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<sup>38</sup> His mother was Dorothy Kempe, of the large Norfolk Kempe family, to whom Clere Talbot was related. Her husband was Ralph Leigh (sometimes Lea) variously of Sussex or Cheshire.

<sup>39</sup> W. Bruce Bannerman, *The registers of St Olave, Hart Street, London 1563-1700*, London 1916, 198.

<sup>40</sup> Bannerman, *Registers of St Olave*. Childhood deaths, unsurprising events at any time in the seventeenth century, increased during these years. 'The register of St. Olave's shows that in this parish, from July 4 to December 5, 1665, there were buried 326 people'. From 'The neighbourhood of the Tower: (part 3 of 3)', *Old and New London: Volume 2* (1878), pp. 107-116. URL: <http://british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45079&strquery=saintolavehart>, accessed 9 May 2010. By 1665 the disease was raging throughout London and two-thirds of the population had abandoned the city.

<sup>41</sup> As noted previously, there is no record of his attending university, but pursuing holy orders without a degree was far from singular in the messy days following the restoration. In lieu of a degree, a candidate would have been expected to have a robust understanding of Latin and Greek and have mastered a not inconsiderable reading list of classical literature. W. M. Jacob's *The Clerical Profession in the Long Eighteenth Century, 1680-1840* discusses this in detail. With whom Clere studied before his diaconal ordination is unknown.

<sup>42</sup> TNA/PRO/Prob/11/329: Will of Charles Leigh

<sup>43</sup> NRO, DUN 64/1/16-18, 105x5. Why Clere was in Dagenham (and whether his family was with him) is unknown. The family were unlikely to have relocated as a result of the Great Fire, as the parish of St Olave Hart Street was mostly untouched by the devastation. There is no apparent Talbot or Leigh connection to a small village that, even in the mid-seventeenth century, was unremarkable.

there were financial dealings between the siblings and she and her husband, George Kempe, may have provided some degree of assistance. In the same letter Clere piously observes, 'I have lost my ague some 3 weeks, with the use of no other means, than prayer.'

On 18 December 1668 — at thirty-nine years old, with a wife and two, possibly three, children<sup>44</sup> — Clere Talbot Jnr was ordained to the diaconate at St Martin's Palace in Norwich. His listed educational qualification was 'student' and he was appointed 'to be the curate of Mr John Talbot at Cranwich'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Robert was about eight years old and Edward about five; a daughter, Hanna, is referred to in private family genealogical research as born about 1666, but no supporting evidence of her birth or baptism has been found.

<sup>45</sup> Ordained deacon at St Martin's Chapel at the palace by Edward Reynolds, bishop of Norwich, 18 December 1668. Ordination Record 70212, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009. In addition to his appointment at Cranwich, Clere Talbot Jnr was licensed as a preacher to the parish of Buckenham 'and other neighbouring churches'. His educational qualification is described as 'theo studiesus'. Ordination Record 313009, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 26 May 2010.





### *The confusion of John Talbots*

Clere Talbot Jnr and John Talbot, the rector of Cranwich,<sup>46</sup> (hereafter called Talbot of Peterhouse) were first cousins once removed. John Talbot of Peterhouse, unlike his cousin Clere, was raised in more comfortable circumstances. His father was Thomas Talbot III and his mother's well-to-do family owned Lofts Hall in Essex; his maternal grandfather was Sir John Mede. John Talbot of Peterhouse was born in 1645, schooled at Elmdon, Essex, and followed the traditional Talbot path of matriculation at Cambridge, in this case at Christ's

<sup>46</sup> Ordained deacon at St Martin's Chapel at the palace by Edward Reynolds, bishop of Norwich, 3 August 1665; ordained priest 17 December 1669 by the same prelate at the same place. Ordination Record 24303 and Ordination Record 27849, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 28 July 2009. This Talbot was the son of Thomas Talbot III and Joan Mede, through Thomas Talbot [Jnr], brother of Dr Clere Talbot, and it is his biography often attributed to John Talbot of New Jersey.



College as a sizar at age 15.<sup>47</sup>

Talbot of Peterhouse was more than an ordinary scholar, becoming Parke Fellow in 1664 and additionally a fellow of Peterhouse.<sup>48</sup> He took deacons orders in August 1665 and was appointed schoolmaster at Cranwich, become rector of the parish in November 1667<sup>49</sup> whilst continuing as a fellow at Peterhouse. He was granted an MA in 1670 by royal mandate.<sup>50</sup>

He seems to have been something of a high-handed character, prone to take risks. One of his well-born students at Peterhouse was William Finch, fourth Viscount Maidstone.<sup>51</sup> In 1666, during a bad bout of the plague, he and his student vacated the city of Cambridge for the Norfolk countryside, staying at Felbrigg Hall, the home of Talbot's twice-married aunt, Elizabeth [Mede] Wyndham Chamberlayne.

Having a daughter of marriageable age, the fortuitous presence of a peer proved alluring to Mrs Wyndham, despite the fact that Viscount Maidstone was only fourteen. Talbot took part in the scheme to unite Elizabeth Wyndham (the daughter) and Viscount Maidstone by marrying the young couple.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Edward Walker, *Admissions to Peterhouse or S. Peter's college in the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge 1912, 'Maii 24 1664, Johannes Talbot', 125-6.

<sup>48</sup> Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis, Part I*, Vol. iv, 'John Talbot'

<sup>49</sup> Appointment Record 64410, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 28 July 2009. The patronage was held in the Knyvett family, distant relatives of the Talbots.

<sup>50</sup> 'Petition of John Talbot, B.A., to the King, for a royal letter enabling him to take the degree of Master of Arts, having performed the necessary exercises but yet not taken it'. Document Ref.: SP 29/278 f.206 Folio Numbers: ff. 206- Date: Sept.? 1670 Source Archive: The National Archives of the UK, Gale Document Number: MC4328182556 *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2010

<sup>51</sup> From *I On Myself Can Live: A Literary Biography of Anne Finch (1661–1720)*, an unpublished work by Professor Ellen Moody made available on her website. The Talbot anecdote is found in chapter two: <http://jimandellen.org/finch/emion2-3.htm>

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.* Professor Moody writes: 'From the extant documents it is clear that the girl's mother encouraged the courtship, and John Talbot performed the marriage ceremony'.



Once the marriage became known, there was much anger on the part of the bridegroom's father, the Earl of Winchilsea, but eventually a financial settlement was arranged and marital peace prevailed. Surviving records of Peterhouse suggest that John Talbot was formally reprimanded in June 1667 for his role in this morally untidy affair.<sup>53</sup>

It was not the only time that Talbot of Peterhouse indulged in an ethical lapse. As a fellow of the college, he was obliged to remain single. But in 1667 he married one Isabella Jenney and kept this from the college. On 31 August 1668 — presumably under questioning — he admitted his marriage, and the fellowship was declared vacant.<sup>54</sup> He then settled into the life of a Norfolk parish priest.<sup>55</sup>

The second John Talbot in holy orders (called Talbot of Brampton) was the son of Abigail Sedley and Thomas Talbot IIIA, the barrister, brother of the Reverend Clere Talbot. This John Talbot was born circa 1655, and after taking his BA from Clare Hall, Cambridge in 1677 (and an MA in 1680), was ordained by Anthony Sparrow, the bishop of Norwich as deacon on 26 May 1678 and priest on 27 February 1681, both at Norwich Cathedral.<sup>56</sup> After a few years as curate at Thorpe and Wreningham in Norfolk, he was instituted to the benefice of Brampton in Suffolk,<sup>57</sup> which was joined in 1689 by personal union of the bishop to Shadingfield, a parish just over a mile away. John Talbot remained in

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<sup>53</sup> Christopher Wordsworth, *Social Life at the English Universities in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge 1874, 400. The master at the time, Beaumont, was prone to take offence easily at the behaviour of his fellows, but the reprimand in this case surely seems justified.

<sup>54</sup> Walker, *Admissions to Peterhouse*, 125-6.

<sup>55</sup> Ordination Record 70212, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009. In 1669 Talbot of Peterhouse was also attached to St James, Icklingham by personal union (an anomalous Diocese of Norwich episcopal prerogative), becoming rector in 1673. He continued to oversee both parishes until his death in 1689. (Appointment Record 20917, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 3 September 2009.) In St James, Icklingham, there is a plaque to his memory. He and wife were buried in the parish churchyard.

<sup>56</sup> Ordination Records 61837 and 62001, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Appointment Record 139073, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 17 September 2009.



that combined benefice until his death at about age seventy-one on 23 November 1728.<sup>58</sup> He never married.

John Talbot of Brampton doesn't appear to have had much to do with any of his relatives in holy orders. From surviving records, he seems to have lived a quiet, unexceptionable life, certainly when compared to his seafaring first cousin, John Talbot of New Jersey, or his scholarly and dramatic second cousin, John Talbot of Peterhouse.



But by 1688, Talbot of Peterhouse was shedding some of his dramatic tendencies and settling down into a country cure. In December he welcomed Clere Talbot Jnr as his curate.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Vacancy Record 143234, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 17 September 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Clere was his first cousin once removed.

*John Talbot of New Jersey: childhood and early years*

Cranwich was a tiny parish located some twenty miles southeast of King's Lynn in Norfolk. At the time of Clere's appointment, Hannah Talbot was pregnant with another child. Born in January 1668/69, John Talbot<sup>60</sup> (hereafter Talbot of New Jersey) was baptized on 21 January at St Bartholomew's, Groton, Suffolk,<sup>61</sup> where his older brother had been baptized some six years earlier. Why Hannah wasn't in Cranwich to have the baby baptised by her newly ordained husband (or by Talbot of Peterhouse) remains a mystery.

After his year's curacy in Cranwich, Clere was ordained to the priesthood on 12 December 1669 in St Martin's Chapel in the Bishop's Palace at Norwich, the same day as his cousin, John Talbot of Peterhouse, under whom he had been studying and working.<sup>62</sup> The Reverend Clere Talbot was assigned to South Acre (modern spelling Southacre) to serve under the Reverend Benedict Rively. Rively had been in the parish since 1652 before his ordination, 'admitted by the ministers of the presbytery by ordinance of Parliament'.<sup>63</sup> Rively seems to have been something of a scholar,<sup>64</sup> so Clere Talbot Jnr likely continued some degree of study under him.

'Some degree', for in 1668 Rively had been appointed rector of Thungarton, roughly thirty miles to the east of Southacre (the bishop allowing a personal union between the two distant parishes). Rively spent most of his time in

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<sup>60</sup> Probably named in honour of John Talbot of Peterhouse, who was Clere's relative, rector, and probably theological tutor at the time of John Talbot of New Jersey's birth.

<sup>61</sup> Suffolk Record Office, Groton Parish Register 1561-1900, FL506/4/7-8. The question remains as to why two Talbot children were baptized (and born?) in Groton. Future research may reveal be a closer family connection beyond the Kempe and Leigh names of the rector.

<sup>62</sup> Ordination Record 70269, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Appointment Record 141698, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 26 May 2009.

<sup>64</sup> Rively (occasionally Riveley or Revelly) delivered the funeral oration for the Bishop of Norwich, Edward Reynolds in 1676 and is recorded as having been a 'Library Keeper' of the Norwich Public Library from 1673-75 (George A. Stephen, *Three Centuries of a City Library*, Norwich 1917, 43).

Thungarton, leaving Clere to oversee Southacre<sup>65</sup> and to live with his family in the parsonage. That family increased in size, with two daughters, Elizabeth and Debora born in 1670 and 1674, and another son, Charles, born in 1672. In Southacre, where he lived from infancy to age six, John Talbot of New Jersey would have formed his first impressions of church and ministry.

Southacre was a remote village even by seventeenth-century standards, the *Magna Britannia*<sup>66</sup> dryly commenting 'It is noted for nothing'. St George's Church, although typical in style of many in the diocese, possessed a remarkable monument dedicated in 1623 to the memory of Edmund Barkham, a former mayor of London, and his wife, the Barkhams having long been the prominent family of the village. Its lavish baroque style, with angels, skulls, shrouds, bones, and praying children — along with astonishingly realistic effigies of the Barkhams — would have been something of a sensation for the small church and presumably for the small boy John Talbot was in this parish.

Even with a rectory, the stipend for a resident curate was probably less than ten pounds a year, a pitiable sum. In what might be called something of a lateral career move, in 1675, at age forty-five, Clere accepted the living of Spixworth<sup>67</sup> — some thirty miles to the east, just outside the city of Norwich — and was instituted at St Peter's Church on 15 December. The living came through family connections; the patron of the parish was Thomas Pecke and his mother was Anne Talbot Pecke,<sup>68</sup> Clere's first cousin. The benefice included a rectory, but even so, a family with eight sons and daughters would have been desperately stretched on the meagre stipend of six pounds per year

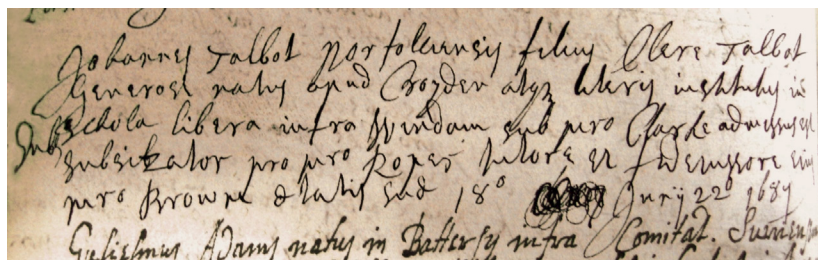
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<sup>65</sup> And the Southacre parish register attests to that. All the baptism, marriage, and burial entries from 1689 through much of 1675 are in Clere's handwriting. Norfolk Parish Registers: Southacre: Baptisms, Marriages, Burials 1572-1783, digital images, from <http://www.familysearch.org>, accessed 22 June 2010.

<sup>66</sup> *Magna Britannia Antiquae et Nova or a New, Exact, and Comprehensive Survey of the Ancient and Present State of Great-Britain, Vol. III, Middlesex-Northumberland*, London 1738, 347. In 1808 Southacre had eight houses and seventy-eight inhabitants. (*A Topographical Dictionary of the United Kingdom*, Benjamin Pitts Capper, London 1808, 'South Acre')

<sup>67</sup> Spixworth in 1808 comprised nine houses and eighty-one inhabitants. (Capper, *A Topographical Dictionary*, 1808)

<sup>68</sup> Anne Talbot Pecke (1616–1675) was the only daughter of Thomas Talbot Jnr, the oldest son of Thomas Talbot LL.D. She was also the aunt of John Talbot of Peterhouse. She died the year Clere was presented with the Spixworth living. (Palgrave-Moore, *Norfolk Pedigrees*, 188)



and whatever little family money remained.<sup>69</sup>

The oldest son, Robert, was the first to leave the family. He was admitted as a sizar at Clare College on 21 June 1679 at age eighteen, taking his BA in 1682.<sup>70</sup> Ordained deacon in 1683, he became rector of Wickhampton in eastern Norfolk and in 1685<sup>71</sup> combined that with the living of Freethorpe, some eight miles away, through personal union by the bishop.

In 1682, the same year Robert earned his bachelors degree, on 1 November, Edward Talbot, the second oldest son, was married to Clem[entine?] Cum-myns at Spixworth parish church. In 1684, their first child — Clere's first grandchild — was named John Talbot<sup>72</sup> and baptized at St Peter's on 29 May.<sup>73</sup>

During the time his older brothers were matriculating and marrying, John Talbot was sent to Wymondham, the Talbot's ancestral home, to attend the grammar school there, under the Reverend Richard Clarke.<sup>74</sup> As Wymondham

<sup>69</sup> Their state was perilous enough that in 1683 Clere Talbot wrote to William Sancroft, the Archbishop of Canterbury, for assistance, 'pleading poverty'. Oxford University, Bodleian Library, MSS Rawl: D Miscellaneous, 137, f.

<sup>70</sup> Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, 'Robert Talbot'

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> This pattern of naming male children 'John Talbot' suggests that Talbot of Peterhouse may well have been assisting the extended Talbot family in financial and other ways.

<sup>73</sup> *Norfolk Parish Registers: Spixworth: Baptisms, Marriages, Burials 1551–1763*, digital images, from <http://www.familysearch.org>, accessed 29 July 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Subscription Evidence Record 64667, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009. Clarke later took a parish position in Norfolk and died in his cure in 1708 (Vacancy Evidence Records 126166 and 126187), CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009.



was thirteen miles from Spixworth, Talbot likely boarded with a relative.<sup>75</sup>

With Edward married, Robert settled in a parish, and John soon to leave for university, in February 1687, Clere, now fifty-eight years old, drew up his will.<sup>76</sup> He divided his small estate amongst his eight children, leaving each child a hundred-pound legacy to be paid at fifteen years of age.<sup>77</sup> He named John as the overseer for the distribution; his wife, Hannah, was appointed executrix. Hannah was left property and lands in Wymondham for her maintenance, unless she married again before the youngest child was fifteen years of age. ('Property' presumably refers to some small remnant of the vast holdings of his father, Dr Clere Talbot.) Clere Jnr was quite particular that she be paid on the 'four festival days' of 'the Annunciacion of the Lady Mary: the nativity of St John Baptist: St Michael the Archangel: the nativity of our Saviour'.<sup>78</sup> In the will, Clere emphasised that he wished Hannah to see to the

'maintenance, educacion, and placing of my children, desiring her to do her best endeavours to educate & bring them up in learning & in the fear of God & to place them forth in convenient time in such manner as may tend to their preferment & to make them usefull to the public good in their generations'.

In a codicil to the will, executed on 24 July 1688 just weeks before he died,

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<sup>75</sup> Thomas Talbot, Clere's brother, was still resident there and as John Talbot's uncle, that makes him a likely candidate.

<sup>76</sup> NRO, Norfolk Consistory Court, original will, 1689, no. 19 'Talbot, Clere, clerk, of Spixworth'

<sup>77</sup> Charles, the youngest son, was 14 when the will was made. The youngest child, Martha, was nine.

<sup>78</sup> In a more elaborate variation of the formulaic preamble to a will in which the writer commends his soul to God, Clere writes: 'I bequeath my soul into the hands of my most gracious God, relying upon the account of Jesus Christ my only & ever blessed Saviour & Redeemer to receive pardon of all my sins and that it shall pass from the many & various troubles of this life & this Tabernacle of clay immediately at Death into a joyfull & glorious Mansion in the eternal Kingdom of Heaven, there to have the happy fruition of God, Christ, the Holy Ghost, Angels & Saints until the days of eternity'. The use of the term 'immediately' suggests that Clere was a firm adherent of Article xxii of the Thirty-Nine Articles, rejecting the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory and falling squarely in line with Catholic-minded theologians of his period, who asserted that classical Christian belief called for an intermediate state until the return of Christ and the day of Judgement.

Clere reduced Robert's legacy to twenty shillings, with instructions that the remainder be used to satisfy his debts and pay his creditors, primarily in Cambridge, who are listed by name, with the amounts owing to them. (Since Robert Talbot had been rector of Wickhampton for four years by this time, he appears to have been singularly incompetent at retiring debts he presumably incurred as a student.) Debora's legacy is reduced to eighty pounds, with the twenty pounds removed to be divided between her sisters Elizabeth and Hannah. What prompted the Debora's reduction isn't specified.

## *Cambridge and ordination*

Talbot entered the College of St John the Evangelist, Cambridge, on 22 June 1687 at eighteen years of age<sup>79</sup> and matriculated on 9 July.<sup>80</sup> Why St John's is unknown, as the Talbot family inclined to Gonville and Caius and John's older brother, Robert, attended Clare Hall. St John's was known at that time as the 'high church seminary'<sup>81</sup> of Cambridge. The college was said to be the first to fully implement the Laudian statutes in the 1630s, robustly supported Charles I, and later was singular in that twenty fellows and eight scholars were nonjurors (the rest of Cambridge only produced fourteen, the same number mustered by all of Oxford). Perhaps Richard Clarke, John's tutor, suggested St John's or perhaps Talbot's royalist family background along with his father's high-church sympathies led him to that college. There are no surviving references or recommendations that shed light on the choice.

The admissions register of the college—likely in the handwriting of the praelector—confusingly notes 'Croyden' as John Talbot's place of birth, puzzling both Venn and Mayor<sup>82</sup> (who added a question mark after the location). Since the parish register of Groton, Suffolk confirms John Talbot's baptism at that location, 'Croyden' can now be understood to be a phonetic transcription oâf the way John Talbot pronounced the name of the village.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Digital copy of the admissions register provided by the Archivist of St John's College, Cambridge.

<sup>80</sup> Information courtesy of email communication from Jacqueline Cox, Deputy Keeper of the University Archives, Cambridge University.

<sup>81</sup> The phrase is John Gascoigne's, in *Cambridge in the Age of Enlightenment: Science, Religion and Politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution*, Cambridge 1989

<sup>82</sup> *Admissions to the College of St. John the Evangelist in the University of Cambridge: Part II*, edited by J. E. B. Mayor, Cambridge 1893, 'July 1687.

<sup>83</sup> In the seventeenth century, C to G was a common consonantal shift and the sounds assigned to 'ot' varied widely. Since there was as yet no standardized orthography, one can only accuse John Talbot of being more imaginative in his pronunciation, to the confusion of both the praelector who was making the entry and future historians who simply took 'Croyden' at face value. In the admissions register of Clare College, Robert Talbot's entry has the more common



Later in the register entry, Talbot describes his father Clere not as a clerk (*clericus*), as would be expected, but as a gentleman (*generosus*). If that choice was more than mere caprice, it suggests that the family's landed gentry status, although historic by that time, meant a good deal to him.

John Talbot was admitted as a sizar 'for Mr Roper'<sup>84</sup> and his tutor and surety was one 'Mr Browne'.<sup>85</sup> Both were later ejected from the college as nonjurors,

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spelling of 'Groton'.

<sup>84</sup> Francis Roper (1642–1719) 'was nearing the end of his life when he was ejected. He was elected fellow in 1666, so he held his fellowship for nearly forty years, but he lost all other preferments at the time of the Revolution . . . Refusing to take the new oaths he was deprived of his prebend and rectory in 1690, and . . . remained at Cambridge for the rest of his life', in J. H. Overton, *The nonjurors: their lives, principles, and writings*, London 1902, 197.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Browne (1654–1741), 'was elected at St. John's in January 1671–2, and admitted fellow: March 1677–8; he wrote several works, the most important of which were a "Defence of our English Ordination against the Nag's Head Fable," and an answer to Bishop Stillingfleet's famous discourse, "The Unreasonableness of a New Separation." Like many Nonjurors, he seems to have found, when he was turned out of his fellowship in his old age, a friend and pa-

Browne in 1708 and Roper in 1715. (Hilkiah Bedford, who later became a nonjuring bishop, was a fellow of St John's when Talbot was a student.)

Matriculating at the same time at Emmanuel College was Richard Gillingham 'of Norfolk',<sup>86</sup> who became a close friend and later served as Talbot's attorney,<sup>87</sup> one of Talbot's circle who can be identified with certainty.



Slightly more than a year after Talbot enrolled at St John's, his father Clere died at Spixworth on 9 August 1688.<sup>88</sup> John,

the oldest son without ties of wife, family, or profession, was now responsible for his mother and (probably) four sisters, who presumably would have been required to vacate the Spixworth rectory.



As this was an anxious period in Talbot's personal life, so it was in the public sphere. The political roil that preceded the Glorious Revolution was occurring, and both Oxford and Cambridge universities were subject to

harassment and punishments by James II. John Talbot's sympathies were, by birth and upbringing, aligned with the House of Stuart. If he was dismayed at the unbridled Roman Catholicism of James II, he viewed the advent of William of Orange with deep distrust. The suspension and then deprivation of the nonjuring bishops—including his own bishop of Norwich—must have

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trouled him without whose aid he would have passed his last days in penury.' Overton, *Nonjurors*, 198.

<sup>86</sup> Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, 'Richard Gillingham'.

<sup>87</sup> George Morgan Hills, *History of the Church in Burlington*, Trenton 1885, 722, copies of Board of Admiralty records. As Talbot's proxy, Gillingham received wages that Talbot was due for his later service in 1701/02 as a chaplain on the Centurion. From the few surviving letters from Talbot to Gillingham, he also appears to have conveyed monies in some way or other to Talbot's family. Gillingham was a praelector at the Inner Temple after his ordination in 1693 (Ordination Record 134580, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 5 April 2009) and in 1701 became vicar of Chigwell, Essex until his death in 1721 (Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, 'Richard Gillingham').

<sup>88</sup> *Norfolk Parish Registers: Spixworth: Baptisms, Marriages, Burials 1551–1763*, digital images, from <http://www.familysearch.org>, accessed 12 September 2010.

cast doubt on the state of the church and his own future.

According to tradition, he received his bachelor's degree in 1691<sup>89</sup> and was ordained to the diaconate on 17 October 1691 by Henry Compton, bishop of London, at Fulham Palace and to the priesthood the next day by the same prelate, in the same location.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> There is some question of this. There is no evidence of a degree in the archives of St John's College, and his name does not appear in the *Graduati Cantabrigienses* or in the *University Grace Book Theta, 1690-1692*. (Information courtesy of Jacqueline Cox, Deputy Keeper of the University Archives.) But Bishop Compton's *Register of Ordinations* states that Talbot held a BA from St John's. Perhaps Venn's counsel should prevail: 'Not infrequently a candidate for orders is described as B.A. or M.A. when no such degree is recorded. There is no reason to suspect fraud here. The degree may have been conferred, and the Registry have neglected to enter it in his books. But, more frequently what was meant is probably this: that the man had satisfied the requirements as to standing, etc., and had received the *testamur* from his College, but that owing to illness or absence had not been actually admitted to a degree by the University' (Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Preface). On the other hand, one can make a case that Talbot did not, in fact, take the oath required to obtain his degree.

<sup>90</sup> See John Talbot Ordination Records 90846 and 90852, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 2 March 2009. The rapid sequence of ordinations was not unusual for men intending to serve as sea chaplains and missionaries.

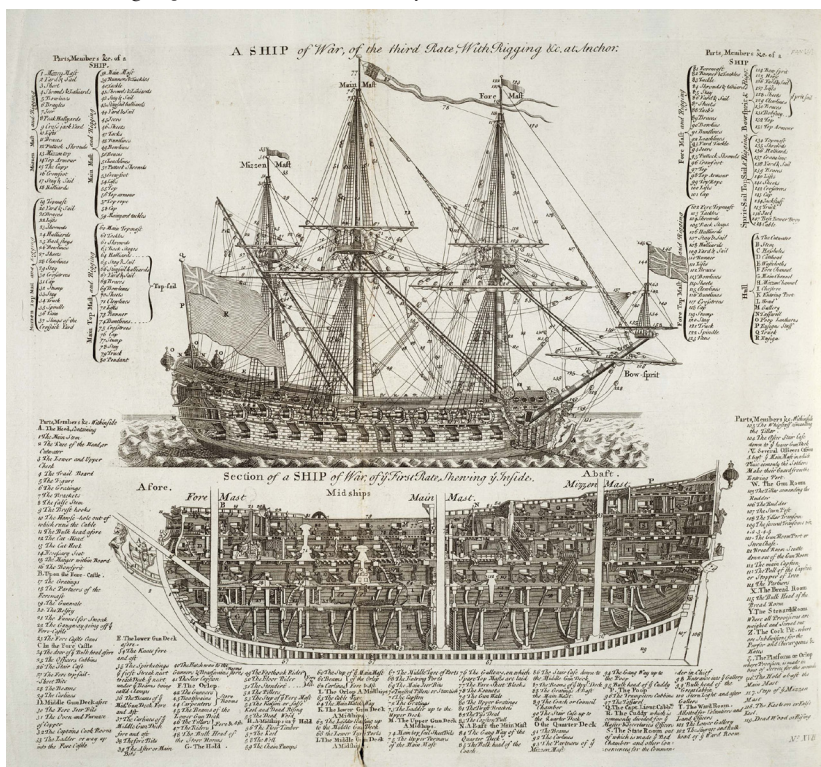


### *Chaplaincy, Virginia, and Gloucestershire*

Less than a week after his priestly ordination on 23 October 1691, Talbot, along with several just-ordained men, received twenty pounds 'as royal bounty towards defraying the charges of their passage to Virginia, whither they are going chaplains'.<sup>91</sup> On 23 February 1691/92, the ship embarked. Talbot's just-ordained shipmates included Charles Anderson, Andrew Smith, James Wallace, and one 'Astley'.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> 'Entry Book: October 1691, 21-31', in *Calendar of Treasury Books, Volume 9: 1689-1692*, London 1931, 1352-1363.

<sup>92</sup> Most of the group can be further identified by means of the October 1691 ordinations of



It's impossible to say with certainty why Talbot chose a chaplaincy rather than a cure, but the twenty-pound bounty would have been greater than the annual stipend of many small benefices in Norfolk and a new 'Williamite' bishop in the Diocese of Norfolk may have made his native diocese unappealing. Further, Talbot had Buxton and Kemp[e] cousins in Virginia, who had been long settled there. Richard Kemp[e] had served as secretary of the colony in 1634 and acting governor in 1644–1645; his children were Talbot's contemporaries.<sup>93</sup> It's conceivable, too, that Talbot responded to the effort by Bishop Compton to recruit clergy to teach at the just-chartered College of William and Mary<sup>94</sup> although there is no evidence of his association with that institution.

According to George Keith, '[Talbot] had been in Virginia eight years before, in charge of a parish on the Elizabeth River.'<sup>95</sup> Talbot cannot be identified with certainty in the extant records of those parishes in what is now the Hampton Roads area. And there are no traces of Talbot in any of the standard works documenting colonial clergy in Virginia or elsewhere in America prior to

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Bishop Henry Compton, the same month as John Talbot's ordination (Ordinary Tenure 1D 309, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 22 August 2009). All are listed in the bishop of London's register as chaplains to Virginia; oddly, John Talbot isn't. And Talbot isn't listed in the subscription book (which his just-ordained shipmates are), which raises at a very early date the question of oaths. Yet it seems inconceivable that Compton would have ordained Talbot if he had not taken the oath of loyalty to William and Mary.

Talbot's name is found under the year 1693 in the roster of 'Naval Chaplains from 1685 to 1903', Appendix V in Gordon Taylor's *The Sea Chaplains: A History of the Chaplains of the Royal Navy*, Oxford 1978. Taylor compiled the roster from records of State Papers Domestic, Ticket Office Pay Lists, Commission and Warrant Books, Muster Books and Chaplains' Full Pay Ledgers at the Public Record Office. He drew heavily on the earlier work of AG Kealy, published in 1905.

<sup>93</sup> 'The disposition of English Kinsmen to settle in groups in Virginia is illustrated in the history of the Kemp family. The children of Sir Thomas Kemp and his wife, Dorothy Thompson, consisted of four daughters: Mary married Sir Dudley Diggs, and was the mother of Governor Edward Diggs; Ann married Sir John Call; Dorothy married Sir John Chicheley, the father of Governor Chicheley; Amy married Sir John Skipwith. *Va. Maga. of Hist. and Biog.*, Vol. xxix, p 137', quoted in Philip A. Bruce, *Social Life of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, Richmond 1907, 43.

<sup>94</sup> The charter for College of William and Mary granted by the crown on 14 February 1692/93. The bishop of London was appointed chancellor.

<sup>95</sup> Ethyn Williams Kirby, *George Keith*, New York 1942, 126. Tracing Talbot's movements in Virginia from 1692 through 1695 remains an area for research.



1695. However he spent his roughly three years in Virginia, in 1695 Talbot returned to England and was appointed curate and then rector of the parish of Fretherne, Gloucestershire, instituted on 29 June 1695.<sup>96</sup>

During the time that Talbot was in Virginia, his brother Robert resigned his cure in Norfolk to accept a living in the Diocese of Gloucester, at Welford on Avon, a larger and more prosperous parish. The appointment was effective on 30 June 1692.<sup>97</sup> Robert's being in that diocese may have been instrumental in obtaining for John his first cure.

Fretherne was a tiny parish of less than thirty houses and a poor living (with a meagre stipend of some five pounds).<sup>98</sup> In the early eighteenth century, the population was 125.<sup>99</sup> The church of St Mary the Virgin was a tiny edifice 'of one entire aisle with a wooden tower at the west end. A view of the church in 1841 shows it to have been a simple building with no break visible on the outside between chancel and nave'.<sup>100</sup> The parsonage 'was a fairly small house containing a hall, a schoolroom, three bedrooms, and a cheese-loft'.<sup>101</sup>

Once in Fretherne, Talbot became part of a circle interested in missionary endeavours and, if not nonjurors themselves, keenly supportive of them. This group included Catharine Bovey<sup>102</sup> of Flaxley Abbey; Robert Frampton, de-

<sup>96</sup> Subscription Record 68277, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 27 February 2009.

<sup>97</sup> Subscription Record 68236, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 2 March 2009.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas Rudge, *The History of the County of Gloucestershire Brought Down to the Year 1803*, Volume 1, Gloucester 1803, 358

<sup>99</sup> 'Fretherne and Saul: Introduction' *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 10: West-bury and Whitstone Hundreds* (1972), 155-160. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=15798>, accessed 6 September 2010.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, 165-168.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, 165-168. It appears that one of his sisters lived in the parish, for the wedding of 'Deborah Talbote' and 'John Weels' occurred on 6 February 1700 (Gloucestershire Archives, Bishop's transcripts for Fretherne, 1617-1916). Debora was one of Clere and Hannah Talbot's eight living children.

<sup>102</sup> More accurately, Boevey, but 'Bovey' was the spelling that the family itself used in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The most complete biography of Catharina Bovey is found in Arthur Williams Crawley-Boevey 1911 work '*The Perverse Widow; or Memorials of the Boevey Family and of Catharina Boevey of Flaxley Abbey, Gloucestershire*'. Crawley-Boevey includes

prived bishop of Gloucester; and Sir William Bayley and his daughter, Dorothy, Sir William being the patron of the parish.

Frampton was that rare species of born adventurer who had travelled abroad extensively earlier in his life and served for nearly two decades as a chaplain for the Levant Company at Aleppo, Syria.<sup>103</sup> That, combined with his robust, non-papist catholicity and his nonjuror credentials, would have made him a particularly attractive figure to Talbot. Catherine Bovey, brilliant, enigmatic, and wealthy (and very likely a muse of Richard Steele), directed her time and attention and ample funds to supporting the Church.<sup>104</sup> George Hickes, one of the more towering intellects amongst the nonjurors, also admired Bovey and dedicated one of his works to her. The Bayley family, patrons of the parish, seem to have been devoted to the church and sympathetic to the nonjuring cause.

Whatever impression Talbot made amongst this influential circle, he seems to have left little impression in the parish itself. In the energetic nineteenth-century correspondence in *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries* about Talbot and Fretherne, one contributor writes: 'It certainly is strange that, as already mentioned, "the name of John Talbot [who was incumbent for nine or ten years] does not appear in the old register of Fretherne [1631–1724], either in regard of the rectory, or otherwise.'"<sup>105</sup>

Talbot made confusing arrangements to leave the parish for an extended

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material on the connection between Boevey and the nonjurors.

<sup>103</sup> Frampton was a good friend of John Nelson, who had been a merchant at Aleppo and was instrumental in arranging for Frampton to serve there as chaplain. (*Memoirs of the life and times of the pious Robert Nelson*, by C. F. Secretan, London 1860, 2.) John Nelson was also the father of Robert Nelson, who became widely known for his wide generosity and his Christian writings (especially *A Companion for the Festivals & Fasts of the Church of England*, which ran to numerous editions). A nonjuror, Nelson was rare in maintaining friendships across all church parties and rarer in being disliked by virtually no-one. He was a founding member of the SPG and a firm supporter and friend of Talbot.

<sup>104</sup> Her continued interest in John Talbot's activities in America was shown by her 1708 gift of altar vessels for his church in Burlington and two letters in 1712 to the Bishop of London supporting Talbot's receiving the £100 legacy in Bishop Frampton's will for 'propagating the Gospel in America'.

<sup>105</sup> 'Bishop John Talbot', *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, Volume 1 ed. Beaver Blacker, Gloucester 1881, 457.

around January 1701/2, apparently having first resigned and then changing his mind.<sup>106</sup> It was a muddled leave-taking. It's instructive to consider Talbot's departure, given his high-church background and his already clear nonjuring sympathies.

Talbot would have taken the oaths to James II when he matriculated at Cambridge in 1687. He would have been required to take oaths to William and Mary at his ordination in 1691.<sup>107</sup> In this instance, unlike the original nonjurors, he must have made peace with his conscience and his scruples and sworn or he wouldn't have been ordained. He would have been required to take the oath again in 1695 at the institution to his living in Fretherne, but these would have been once more to William and Mary and presumably required no further examination of conscience on his part.

But on 15 September 1701, in France, James II died and his son James III was proclaimed king of England, Scotland, Ireland, and France.<sup>108</sup> This made the precarious Protestant succession somewhat shakier, so an act to secure the succession was passed by Parliament in autumn 1701.<sup>109</sup> The act required not only an oath that specifically abjured the House of Stuart, it required the taker to recognize the legitimacy of William's reign—'a point', as one scholar commented, 'hitherto discreetly evaded'—and to acknowledge the line of succession that would follow at William's death.

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<sup>106</sup> The full story of Talbot's leaving Fretherne will be told later.

<sup>107</sup> Although as noted earlier, his name does not appear in the subscription book, according to the CCEd.

<sup>108</sup> 'Shortly after the death of James II an Act of Parliament was passed by which all persons holding public office were compelled to abjure the Pretended Prince of Wales, and on the Accession of George I a similar Act was passed renewing in somewhat more stringent terms the enforcement of the Abjuration . . . The distinction sometimes drawn between the Non-Abjurors, or those who refused the oaths of 1701–02 and 1714, and the original Non-Jurors, who refused to swear allegiance to the Government of William and Mary is not of much practical interest.' From 'A biography of Thomas Deacon: the Manchester nonjuror', by Henry Broxap, No. xi, 12 n 1, in the *University of Manchester Historical Series*, Manchester 1911. We shall see that it becomes a matter of distinct interest in Talbot's later career.

<sup>109</sup> John Raithby (editor), "William III, 1701: An Act for the further Security of His Majesties Person and the Succession of the Crown in the Protestant Line and for extinguishing the Hopes of the pretended Prince of Wales and all other Pretenders and their open and secret Abettors. [Chapter VI. Rot. Parl. 13 & 14 Gul. III. n. 6.]," *Statutes of the Realm*: volume 7: 1695–1701, British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=47004>

When Talbot returned to naval service in February 1701/2, the new oath had not come into force; it was required for most at the beginning of the quarter session Easter Term 1702. Those living abroad were exempted initially, but would be required to take the oath within three months of their return to England. All 'ecclesiastical persons' were required to take it, but there was this exculpatory clause:

VIII. Proviso for Persons in His Majesty's Service in the Fleet or beyond Sea.

Provided also That nothing herein contained shall be construed to extend to any Person in His Majesties Service on board the Fleet or beyond the Seas or who shall go beyond the Seas in His Majesties Service before the Twentieth Day of May One thousand seven hundred and two so as such Person take the said Oath and subscribe thereunto as aforesaid according to the Appointment of this Act within Three Months after his Return into England.

The oath of abjuration may well have been the reason for Talbot's choosing to leave Fretherne when he did.<sup>110</sup> No doubt he was constrained in such a tiny parish, dismayed by the deteriorating rectory and the cost of repairs, and far more suited to a life of larger scope and purpose. But those alone might not have caused him to leave Fretherne. If Talbot took *any* oath in February 1701/2, presumably it was once more the oath that he had made peace with ten years earlier.

He headed to London, planning to return to service as a naval chaplain. His timing was perfect.

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<sup>110</sup> A curious reference is included in Henry Broxap's brilliant work *The Later Non-Jurors*. He quotes a passage from Nicholas Brett, younger son of Thomas Brett (a nonjuring bishop): '[Talbot] was sent over in Queen Anne's time by Mr Nelson's interest, who did it because he would not take the oaths', p. 89. This suggests that Nelson knew Talbot as early as 1701/2 and may well have suggested that he travel abroad again as a chaplain to avoid the oaths. As an influential and powerful figure as well as a nonjuror, Nelson's support of Talbot would have been vastly helpful.

## *HMS Centurion: a happy coincidence*

In London, on 16 January 1701/2,<sup>111</sup> just after the formal approval of its charter, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel met and considered the ambitious proposal of Patrick Gordon<sup>112</sup> — a member of the Royal Society, eminent geographer, and zealous churchman — for 'Propagating the Gospel in All Pagan Countries'. It was a daring (and

<sup>111</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Vol. 1, 1701-1710*: 16 January 1701/2. Digital image of original minutes: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 8 July 2011

<sup>112</sup> The Reverend Patrick Gordon ( – July 1702) has received too little attention by historians. There is some reference to him in Daniel O'Connor's *Three centuries of mission: the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1701-2000* (London 2000), but it barely does justice to this compelling figure.

One of four sons of James Gordon, a strong-headed Scottish Episcopal priest (who published anonymously a scathing attack on the uselessness of modern bishops, called *The Reformed Bishop*), Patrick Gordon was likely born in his father's parish of Banchory-Devenick in Aberdeenshire. Educated at King's College, University of Aberdeen (BA and MA), he seems to have been by nature an explorer and adventurer. He published in 1693 the astonishing work *Geography anatomized or, The geographical grammar: being a short and exact analysis of the whole body of modern geography*, which remained the standard geography text until the mid-eighteenth century. Dedicated to Thomas Tenison, then Archbishop of Canterbury, its wide-ranging narrative encompassed basic facts about the entire known world, from topology and government to languages, religion, and, somewhat obscurely, coats of arms. The appendix is an eloquent argument for propagating the Gospel 'amongst Pagan Countries', especially America, surely one of the earliest pleas for a coherent, organized plan of missionary activity. One wonders to what degree Gordon's case was instrumental in Thomas Bray's initial draft arguments for establishing a 'Congregation Pro propaganda Fide' in 1698 (Lambeth Palace Library, Fulham Palace Papers, xxxvi, fo. 21-22), which led to the founding the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in 1698 and the SPG in 1701. Gordon's paper was, as noted above, discussed by the SPG January 1701/2.

In 1694, Gordon was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and ordained deacon and priest that same year by Henry Compton, Bishop of London at Fulham Palace (deacon on 28 November; priest on 16 December.) (Ordination Records 98262 and 98263, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 16 August 2009). According to Gordon Taylor in *The sea chaplains: a history of the chaplains of the Royal Navy*, Patrick Gordon served as a naval chaplain on four ships in six years, beginning with an appointment on the *Colchester* in 1695. He may have met Talbot during this period. In a letter of 13 June 1702 to the SPG (*American material in the archives of the USP, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume 1, items 12-13; Patrick Gordon to the Secretary, 13 June 1702: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 9 July 2011), Gordon

to modern sensibilities unpalatable) scheme<sup>113</sup> that unrolled a vast diorama of missionaries spreading English civilisation, language, culture, and church throughout the conquered British territories. The eagerness and urgency of Gordon's appeal, combined with the fact that he was already in holy orders, had had much experience as a naval chaplain, and was ready to settle in America, must have energised that early meeting of the SPG.

Present also at that meeting was Colonel Lewis Morris,<sup>114</sup> a prominent and

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writes that he has known Talbot 'for some years'.

On 20 March 1702 Bishop Compton appointed Gordon a missionary to 'Novi Eburari' [New York] (Appointment Record 77170, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 16 August 2009). Gordon's life was cut short by some sort of infectious disease a few weeks after his arrival in America. He was buried in Jamaica, New York, at the parish where he was to serve.

<sup>113</sup> Gordon's plan placed great emphasis on the establishment of seminaries (used in the sense of Christian schools) in the colonies and provinces, in which young English boys would be educated in all appropriate subjects and trained in the Christian religion. They would, as Gordon conceived, play with the native boys and by those means, introduce them to the English language. (He recommended that the society be certain to send an ample supply of toys to entice the native children.) Eventually the English boys, when educated and grown, would establish themselves as planters on the land and would intermarry with native women. Their children would only be taught the English language and would be brought up as Christians. Those blended families would then establish churches with the English liturgy, propagating English culture along with the gospel. Within a generation, Gordon posits, the 'Indian jargon' and culture would disappear. Meanwhile, the seminaries, missionaries, and teachers would move further west and repeat the same pattern, with education, marriage, and enculturation following every new incursion into native territory.

Gordon was clear in his proposal to the SPG that the only way to populate the seminaries was to take young boys from charity schools in England and send them to America, emphasizing that orphans and foundlings would be best, 'since such children will be wholly at the Society's Disposall, having no near relations that will appear Sollicitous about them'. It makes for distasteful reading, but the plan, in its sheer ambition, is breathtaking. *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Appendix to SPG Journal: Appendix A 1701-1810*, Number viii: Proposals for Propagating the Gospel in All Pagan Countreys, Mr Patrick Gordon <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 12 November 2010.

<sup>114</sup> Subsequent SPG meetings in the late winter and spring of 1701/2 show the frequent presence of Colonel Lewis Morris, Colonel Robert Dudley (Governor of New England), Robert Nelson, and Dr Bray, the founder and benefactor of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in 1698 and a founder of the SPG, who had been resident in Maryland for some time as commissary. *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Vol. 1, 1701-1710: Late winter and spring 1701/2 reports*. Digital images of original journal at <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 24 June 2011.

wealthy resident of the Jerseys in America. He had prepared a lengthy and detailed report on the state of the church in the provinces, including in it recommendations for ways in which to further its mission.<sup>115</sup>

Assembling again just a few weeks later on 27 February 1701/2, the SPG considered a number of letters from Boston, Rhode Island, New York, and Pennsylvania, all pleading for missionaries. During the discussion that followed, the Reverend George Keith was called in. His influential report on the state of religion in the plantations had been prepared in June 1700/1, just after the formation of the SPG, at the request of the secretary<sup>116</sup> and his knowledge of the provinces and plantations, his zeal for pugilistic debate, coupled with his eagerness as a newly ordained Church of England minister, made him the ideal person to return America on a missionary tour.

In addition to being commissioned to survey the state of the church, he hoped to convert Quakers and 'infidels' as well as provide for members of the Church of England, many of whom had languished without resident clergy. It was, as Keith's biographer wrote, 'the sort of task for which he was peculiarly fitted. He had a ready wit—possibly too ready—indomitable courage, a thorough knowledge and comprehension of the problems which he would face, and an unassailable conviction that he was in the right.'<sup>117</sup>

Before adjourning, the society allotted two hundred pounds to Keith for his mission and, presumably at Keith's insistence, a further sum of two hundred pounds to his wife and family should he die during his travels. And they further resolved

that it is the opinion of this Society that six Missionarys should be sent to New York with all Convenient Speed.

that Three ministers should sent to Pensylvania & Three more to the Jersey with all Convenient Speed.

With 'convenient speed'—if without the full complement of requested min-

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<sup>115</sup> 'The Memoriall of Col. Morris concerning the State of Religion in the Jerseys', *Appendix to SPG Journal: Appendix A 1701–1810*. Digital images of report in <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 8 July 2011.

<sup>116</sup> Kirby, *George Keith*, 122.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, 123. The description would later describe John Talbot almost perfectly.

isters—the SPG appointed Patrick Gordon a missionary to New York at its next meeting on 20 March. Gordon had originally planned to board a ship to the West Indies<sup>118</sup> and Keith a ship to Virginia. The travelling plans of Lewis Morris and Robert Dudley, the governor of New England, aren't known, but all four ended up on the *Centurion*,<sup>119</sup> where John Talbot had been entered into the commission and warrant book as chaplain, 'recommended by the Bishop of London' on 25 February 1701/2.<sup>120</sup> He formally reported for duty on 12 March 1701/2.<sup>121</sup>

The *Centurion* sailed from Cowes on 24 April 1702, the day after Princess Anne's coronation. By the time the ship landed near Narragansett on 12 June 1702 Talbot had decided to join Keith in his travels. No doubt the company of Patrick Gordon was also an inducement. (Note that Talbot is thirty-three years old when he makes this decision, not an improbable fifty-seven as the traditional biographies have it.)

Choosing to accompany Keith has always seemed a quixotic act on Talbot's part, but he had been in Virginia for some years and knew the nature of life in the plantations. He seems by inclination to have been suited to a life with more peregrination than permanency, so a missionary tour may have been alluring. And by joining Keith, he would more easily be freed of the requirement to take the oath of abjuration.

Just after the *Centurion* landed, George Keith and Patrick Gordon both fired off letters to the SPG regarding Talbot. After a description of their fine voyage

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<sup>118</sup> Likely used here as a general term for America.

<sup>119</sup> A fourth rate ship of line launched in 1691, 125 feet long with a 33 foot beam. It contained 50 guns of various weights of shot. It was broken up in 1728. (From the Wikipedia article [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS\\_Centurion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Centurion); the information is from Brian Lavery, *The Ship of the Line, Vol. 1: The Development of the Battlefleet 1650-1850*, Conway Maritime Press

<sup>120</sup> Hills, *History*, 723. He includes copies of the relevant Admiralty Board records for Talbot's naval service.

<sup>121</sup> Interestingly the will of the deprived bishop of Gloucester, Robert Frampton (one of Talbot's circle in Gloucestershire) contained a specific provision assigning £100 for the 'encouragement of ministers to propagate the Gospell in the Western plantations'. That will was signed and dated 26 February 1701/2, the day after Talbot began his duty as a sea chaplain.



and good company, Keith wrote on 12 June:<sup>122</sup>

The chaplain of the Centurion, whose name is Mr John Talbot known to severall worthy persons of the Clergy in and about London, and to others, to be of good ability and fame, is willing to be my Associate & Assistant in my Travels in the Service of the Gospel in America during my stay there, I have a very good opinion of him, and so I think has Governor Dudley, & Col. Morris, who both have promised to write and send by you to the worthy Corporation, that in their opinion he will be a very helpful and comfortable assistant to me in that work, and I am of the same opinion with them, and am very willing to accept of him, if so it please the Corporation to order it, and allow him some honest competency to bear his charges, the which if they agree to, and approve of, I pray you worthy Sir by the first opportunity write to me their mind, direct your Letter either to Boston, New York, Pensylvania, or Virginia, & it will come safe to me by the General Post.

The said Mr Talbot is known to Mr Felsted of Christ Church in Southwark, to Mr Bromfield, Gentleman of the Temple, one I suppose of your Honorable Corporation, also to Dr Humphrevel of St Andrews by Holbourn Bridge,<sup>123</sup> and partly to Dr Bray, who can give the Corporation a true Character of him. He is not ty'd to the Ship, and I suppose will obtain the Captain's good will to leave her and goe along with me in this Service. He design'd not to continue longer Chaplain to the ship until his Arrival in Virginia, having an Intent to return to a Cure he had of a Congregation there by Elizabeth River some eight years ago, and thinking to have continued in that cure, the People having a great kindness for him. The occasion of his Removal to England was a Law Suit which being ended he purposed to return to his Cure, but he is since informed that

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<sup>122</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737,*

Volume I, items 12-13: George Keith to the Secretary, 12 June 1702. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 9 July 2011.

<sup>123</sup> Bromfield has not been identified with certainty, but he appears as an early member of the SPG (*Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870*: Vol. 1, 1701-1710: 15 August 1701. Digital image of original minutes: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 8 April 2011); Felstede and Humphrevel have not yet been traced.

that Congregation have gott another minister, so that being free in that respect, he is willing to be my Associate, Worthy Sir, with my most humble respects to your Honorable Corporation, present the Contents of the abovewritten in reference to Me Talbot's Proposition and send me their Answer.

Talbot's explanation for being free to join the mission, as reported by Keith, is peculiar. He appears not to have mentioned that he was still legally the rector of the benefice in Gloucestershire. The reference to a lawsuit (presumably occurring in 1694/5, when Talbot returned from Virginia to England), is vague enough to be untraceable. There is no surviving evidence that Talbot was associated with a parish in Virginia, so his returning to that shadowy parish to resume a previous position (all the while holding the Fretherne benefice) seems highly unlikely.

Gordon wrote to the SPG on 13 June:<sup>124</sup>

This comes to acquaint you of our safe Arrival in this place. We had (blessed be God) an excellent Passage, being only five weeks from Land to Land, and above half that time, wither contrary winds or Calms. Had the time of our Passage been as many months as weeks, I might have reckon'd it short, being so happy in the good company I came with. [...] Col. Morris, Mr Keith, & I do (God willing) intend to sett out for Road Island providing we find no vessel here bound for New York.

The thing that brings this letter to old England fall's down from this place this forenoon, and therefore I have only time to tell you that Mr Keith has found a very worthy Gentleman (chaplain of the Centurion) to accompany him in his Mission. The Gentleman's name is John Talbot M.A. a person of very good Part and no worse Morals. I have personally known him for some years, and can warrant what I say. He being much taken with the laudible Design that Mr Keith goe's upon, is willing to leave the Ship, and accompany him during the time of his Mission, and referr's himself to the Corporation to bestow on him what premium that Venerable Body

<sup>124</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume 1, items 12-13; Patrick Gordon to the Secretary, 13 June 1702. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 9 July 2011.

shall think fit.

For the full satisfaction of Mr Talbot's Character he desire's that Enquiry may be made at these persons following viz': the Reverend Mr Felstede, Minister of Christ's Church Southwark, Mr Bromfield gentleman of the Temple & a member of the Corporation, and Captain Edward Whitaker<sup>125</sup> Master Attendant at Woolwich. I need say no more of that matter since I know that Mr Keith and others have writt about it.

Talbot's journey from 1702 to 1703 with George Keith is well documented, both through Keith's famous account and through letters of Keith and Talbot to the SPG. Once they completed their assessment and Keith returned to England, Talbot ended a letter to the SPG that he prayed 'to do my Duty where it has pleas'd God to Call',<sup>126</sup> so he seems by this time to have planned to remain in America indefinitely.

And Fretherne? After Talbot's absence of more than two years, in early 1703/4 his parish petitioned the bishop of Gloucester to declare the cure vacant. Bishop Edward Fowler appointed the Reverend William Smyth<sup>127</sup> in June 1704, as he later explained to the SPG, to enable Smyth to have the entirety of what he termed 'the sorry living'.<sup>128</sup>

The coming dust-up amongst Talbot, Bishop Fowler, and the SPG about the legality and status of Talbot's position in Fretherne sheds further light on the confused situation regarding his absence and his *de facto*, if not *de jure*, resignation.

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<sup>125</sup> Captain [later Sir] Edward Whitaker (1660?–1735) is known principally for his naval career.

<sup>126</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635–1812, the A series letter books, 1702–1737*, Volume 1, item 181: Mr Talbot to the Secretary, 7 April 1704. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 3 March 2010.

<sup>127</sup> In 1698, Smyth was described as a preacher at Frampton-on-Severn (Subscription Evidence Record 68343, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 22 August 2009); it may well be that Talbot had arranged with him to supply Fretherne from time to time. His formal appointment as curate to Fretherne was on 17 June 1704 (Subscription Evidence Record 68482, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 22 August 2009) and as rector on 4 July 1705 (Subscription Evidence Record 68494, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 22 August 2009).

<sup>128</sup> See Fowler's letter quoted on page 49.

*A return to England, a petition for a bishop*

Talbot embarked for England in November 1705, purportedly to argue against the bishop's action, but it is hardly conceivable that his voyage was only to contest Fretherne. Family concerns may have urged the trip, as Robert, his brother, rector of Welford, had continued his profligate habits<sup>129</sup> and it's likely that his mother, Hannah, died in October 1703.<sup>130</sup> In addition, he had been delegated to present a petition drawn up with his fellow missionaries, requesting the appointment of a suffragan bishop for North America.<sup>131</sup>

Presuming his ship arrived by February or March 1705/6, Talbot disappears from sight for nearly the remainder of the year. It's likely he travelled to Gloucestershire to deal with the Fretherne business, to visit his dissolute brother, and see members of his old circle of friends, but his movements cannot be documented until December 1706 in London, when he was present for the 20 December meeting of the SPG.<sup>132</sup>

Mr Talbot attending at the door was called in, & informed the Bord that he is ready to go over in the Service of the Society, but that he has lost his Living in Gloucestershire, it being disposed of by the Lord Bishop of Gloucester & humbly desires some subsistence from the Society, Ordered that the Treasurer do pay the said Mr Talbot the sum of Ten pounds due to him at June last, notwithstanding his stay in England, and that Dr Butler & Mr Stubs do

<sup>129</sup> In 1709 he was sequestered for debts (Venn, *Alumni*); he resigned the benefice on 1 January 1712/13 (Vacancy Evidence Record 209320, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 2 September 2009). He drops out of sight after that time. He had married one Mary Smith on 9 December 1691 in London; they had at least three children. It is not known when he died, where he is buried, or what became of his family.

<sup>130</sup> *Norfolk Parish Registers: Brooke: Baptisms, Marriages, Burials 1678–1733* (Burials: 12 October 1703), digital images, from <http://www.familysearch.org>, accessed 4 August 2010.

<sup>131</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701–1870*: Vol. 1, 1701–1710: 20 December 1706. Digital image of original minutes: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 2 April 2011

<sup>132</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701–1870*: Vol. 1, 1701–1710: 20 December 1706. Digital image of original minutes: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 2 April 2011

wait on the Lord B<sup>p</sup> of Gloucester, desiring his Ld to acquaint the Society of the Reason of his being deprived of his Living in the said Lo<sup>ps</sup> Diocese.

The rejoinder of Bishop Fowler followed quickly on 23 December 1706:<sup>133</sup>

I did not imagine I should ever hear more of Mr Talbot about his Living in my Diocese for as it is a wretchedly poor one, so I was assured his Curate had the whole Income except some smal (sic) matter that went towards Repairs; and the Dilapidations grew worse and worse, so that they were like to be irreparable. And he declared his Resolution to return no more to it; and gave me a Resignation under his hand. I objected against the form, he then pretended he would hold it on; and year after year I had patience with him, till the Patron had lost all his. A deal of do there was about it, which I have forgot the particulars of, till at last upon a Citation & time sufficient given, for his appearance of shewing cause for non appearance, in time and after I had discoursed with Mr Keith I found there was no intention in him to return, I gave Institution upon the Patrons Presentation. Thus it is, as I well as I can remember. . .’

Fowler’s letter was read at the 17 January 1706/7 meeting.<sup>134</sup>

Mr Talbot attending at the door was called in & heard what he had farther to offer in his affair, & read out papers to the Society signed by the Societies missionaries relating to a Suffragan Bishop,<sup>135</sup> and a

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<sup>133</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume III, items 51-2: Lord Bishop of Gloucester to the Secretary, 23 December 1706. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 23 July 2010

<sup>134</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870*: Vol. 1, 1701-1710: 17 January 1706/7. Digital image of original minutes: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 2 April 2011.

<sup>135</sup> The SPG had been dealing with the matter for some time. In the minutes of the December 1704 meeting, it was noted ‘It was also reported from the Committee that they agreed to move the Society to reconsider [illegible] sending over a Suffragan Bishop into the Plantations, Agreed that it be referr’d to the sd Committee to prepare a State of this matter in order it be offer’d to the Consideration of the Attorney or others of the Queen’s Council learned in [illegible] and that Mr John Cook be also consulted on this’. (*Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870*: Vol. 1, 1701-1710: 21 December 1704. Digital image of original minutes:

Paper exhibited the Planters Letters, and an Order of Council dispensing with the Residence of Ministers sent to the seas and to the Plantations, and then Mr Talbot withdrew, and the Society having considered of the whole Matter, the said Gentleman was called in & askt whether he was willing to return by the first opportunity in the Service of the Society, which he desired to consider of against the next Meeting.

This suggests that Talbot was using the 1679 Order as a defence for his simultaneously serving as missionary and a parish priest, but it doesn't explain why he didn't present that argument to the bishop of Gloucester in 1701. And the minutes of the meeting suggest that Talbot quickly turned to presenting other matters: the 'planters letters' with pleas for more missionaries and the petition for a bishop. There is nothing further in the minutes that indicates the petition was taken up or even referred to a committee.

Once again, Talbot appeared at the SPG meeting on 18 April 1707:<sup>136</sup>

[T]he Society being informed that Mr Talbot attended at the Door, he was call'd in & askt whether he would return to his Living of Burlington to wch he consented & promist to take the first Opportunity: Ordered that the Treasurer do pay him the Arrears of his Allowance upon Condition that he take the first Opportunity of a Passage. Ordered that the usual Sums of Ten pounds & ffive pounds be allow'd the said Mr Talbot for books.

Talbot embarked for America some time in autumn 1707, arriving in Rhode Island in December. Winter weather prevented him from reaching Burlington until early spring 1707/8. He had been gone for a little more than two years.

If the petition to the SPG for a suffragan bishop wasn't acted upon straight-away, Talbot was more immediately successful in having arranged for the crown to donate several sets of altar furnishings and vessels to a number of the SPG parishes.

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<http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 15 June 2010)

<sup>136</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870*: Vol. 1, 1701-1710: 21 March 1706/7. Digital image of original minutes: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 2 July 2010

*Party, piety, and politics: 1708 to 1720*

**A**lthough Burlington, New Jersey was now his headquarters, Talbot continued his travels to parishes that had no resident clergy, from northern New Jersey to Delaware, frequently supplying at Christ Church, Philadelphia. And he founded a parish at Bristol, Pennsylvania, across the Delaware River from Burlington.

Talbot's American career from 1702 to 1727 is well documented through surviving correspondence primarily to and from the SPG, as well as a small number of letters to friends.<sup>137</sup> His tireless work to establish the church on the Eastern seaboard is unquestioned. He was aggressive in his sparring with Quakers, no doubt a characteristic that he honed in his long travels with Keith, a master controversialist and Quaker pugilist. Talbot's stridency in matters of doctrine were an occasional source of irritation to the SPG, whose secretary often cautioned him to moderate his attitude to others who disagreed with his high-church principles.<sup>138</sup> Talbot's response makes it clear he had little inclination to soften his approach or his arguments. A brief excerpt captures his personality in all its energy, eagerness, and excess:

I received your long letter and find *Certamen est de lana Caprina*.<sup>139</sup>  
For your Moderation, which is nothing in the World but a Name  
which St Paul never used in all his Epistles nor any thing like it but  
one where 'tis wrong translated; it shou'd be, let your Gentleness  
be known to all men which I am for as much as any body towards  
Man and Beast too, but if you mean Moderation in Religion, as one

<sup>137</sup> The best printed collection remains Edward Legare Pennington's *Apostle of New Jersey John Talbot 1645 (sic)–1727*, Philadelphia 1938. Because Pennington worked from early nineteenth-century transcripts in the Library of Congress and not from the original SPG materials in England, some of the letter texts stray from entire accuracy. But the letters themselves provide a full picture of Talbot's labours and his compelling and often dramatic personality.

<sup>138</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635–1812, the A series letter books, 1702–1737*, Volume 5, item 19; Mr Talbot to the Secretary, 30 June 1709. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 23 July 2010.

<sup>139</sup> A contest about goat's wool; essentially, a tussle over a matter of little account.

said here, "I don't care whether I go to heaven or hell." Good Sir pardon your Servant in this thing; but let's not differ about words but follow the things that are for peace, and things whereby we may plant the Gospel and edify the Church of God.<sup>140</sup>

Amongst other quirks, Talbot had been criticised by some of his colleagues as occasionally preaching in parishes where he hadn't been invited, which provoked a rebuke from the SPG. But Elias Neau, schoolmaster and catechist in New York, balanced the unflattering reports with this perspective:<sup>141</sup>

Mr Talbot ne manqué pas d'ennemis parce qu'il est seul Ministre dans un grand pais et il voudroit bien consoler ces voisins qui l'impriest instantment, je suis temoin desela, car a Elizabet Town on le desire ardamment pour avoir la Communion a Amboys ainsy, ce pendant ces ennemis prennent occasion dedire quil embrace trop et quil ne reside pas antien quon luy a assigné; c'est assurément un digne minister de l'Evangile et qui fait honneur a sa profession, et qui merite votre estime; Vous ignorez pas Mons<sup>rs</sup> quil est impossible de plaire a tou les homes, sur tout quand on occupe des postes qui nont pour que la gloire de Dieu.<sup>142</sup>

After his return to America in 1708, Talbot's high-church sympathies became more pronounced and his desire for the appointment of a bishop grew stronger. He seems also to have identified those clergy whom he could trust

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<sup>140</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume 5, item 19: Mr Talbot to the Secretary, 30 June 1709. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 23 July 2010.

<sup>141</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume 4, item 19: Mr Neau to the Secretary, 21 June 1709. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 23 July 2010.

<sup>142</sup> The English translation made for the Society read: 'Nor is Mr Talbot without enemies, because he is the sole minister in a large Country and he would gladly comfort his Neighbours who earnestly call upon him to do it, of which I am a Witness, for at Elizabeth Town as also at Amboy they ardently desire that he would administer the Communion to them, notwithstanding which his enemies take occasion that he grasps at too much & that he does not reside at the place allotted to him; he is assuredly a worthy minister & an honor to his profession & deserving of your esteem. You are not so ignorant, Sirs, that is it impossible to please every body, especially when one is in a post that has no other aim but the glory of God'.



unreservedly and those whom he doubted, whether for politics or personality. He had little patience for men who weren't willing to labour as long and hard as he did, a high standard for those who were married with families. Talbot presumed that all SPG missionaries were worthy and hardworking, but once he became convinced otherwise, he became highhanded and occasionally implacably opposed to those he saw as slackers or sinners. The case of the Reverend George Ross<sup>143</sup> is an example.

Ross, who had come as an SPG missionary to Pennsylvania-Delaware area in 1705, had some difficulty initially in settling in to his parish of Newcastle, through climate, 'want of encouragement', or distaste for the people. After three years, he abandoned the cure without permission from the SPG and relocated to a parish in Chester, Pennsylvania. This action angered the society, annoyed his fellow missionaries, amongst them Evan Evans,<sup>144</sup> rector of Christ Church, Philadelphia and Talbot, who looked after the Philadelphia area cures when they were bereft of a minister. In 1709, the SPG suspended Ross's salary. He travelled to London to explain his actions, which he did successfully, and so was given leave to return to America. But the ship on which the unlucky Ross was travelling was captured by the French and 'he was taken prisoner by a French man-of-war and carried into Brest, stripped of all his clothes, and treated in the most inhuman manner. He was ultimately released, and

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<sup>143</sup> George Ross, a Scot, was sent to America as an SPG missionary in 1705. (Subscription Evidence Record 78423, CCed, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009.) Although beginning on difficult terms with Evan Evans and some of the other clergy, Ross grew to be respected and much loved. He remained in Newcastle until his death in 1752 at age seventy-three. A brief biography of him is found in William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit*, Volume V: Episcopalian, New York 1859, 24.

<sup>144</sup> Evan Evans, a Welshman, was born circa 1671 and took his BA and MA from Brasenose College, Oxford. Ordained in Wales, he was sent by the bishop of London in 1700 to Pennsylvania to serve the small clutch of Anglicans resident in Philadelphia. His energy and activity there spurred the formation of other parishes in the larger area, many of which he looked after in addition to Christ Church. Evans also held services for the Welsh-speaking people in the area. Like Talbot, he was a tireless advocate for the Church of England, but he seems to have been less choleric and less vociferous. Evans returned to England at least twice, the second time being awarded a DD from Oxford. After his return to America, he removed to Maryland in 1719, finding he could no longer subsist on the meagre (or often nonexistent) stipend in Philadelphia. He returned there on a visit in 1721 to preach at Christ Church and died of a stroke, which had occurred whilst he was in the pulpit. His eulogy was preached by George Ross. Evans was buried under the chancel of Christ Church. (Other sources have him dying at his parish in Maryland and being buried there.) Evans was married, with one daughter.

returned to Chester; but not long after, by direction of the Society, resumed the Mission at Newcastle'.<sup>145</sup>

Despite being captured by the French (common enough that it may not have provoked deep sympathy), the welcome he received from Evans and Talbot was distinctly cool. Ross wrote to the SPG in 1709 when he returned:

I arrived safe at New York on the 18th September being nine weeks in my passage. [...] Mr Evans and I have made up our difference, and I doubt not but that we shall correspond like brethren in time to come. But as for Mr Talbot he hardly allowed me an opportunity to kiss his hand since I came home tho' he passed by my house, he is now bound upon what design I know not; but this I am convinced of, he is not my friend. However I wish him a good settlement in England, and a successor of more agreeable temperament here.

Ross's letter suggests that Talbot had planned another trip to England, possibly to return for good. But whatever the reasons for that idea, in the midst of Talbot's planning for it, in June 1710 General Robert Hunter, the new governor of New York and New Jersey, arrived.<sup>146</sup> As Burlington was the capital of West Jersey and one of the two places<sup>147</sup> that hosted meetings of the Assembly, Hunter visited the town early in his tenure. And of course in Burlington he came to know John Talbot.

On the surface, they were quite alike: bright, quick, impassioned, canny, energetic, and often headstrong. At the beginning of their relationship, Hunter admired Talbot as an 'indefatigable labourer' although he lamented his 'excessive warmth'.<sup>148</sup> His praise, at least initially, for Talbot's energy and zeal seems genuine. But Hunter had wider experience, had travelled more extensively,

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<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, 24

<sup>146</sup> The best biography of him remains Mary Lou Lustig's *Robert Hunter 1666-1734: New York's Augustan Statesman*, Syracuse, 1983.

<sup>147</sup> Perth Amboy, the capital of East Jersey, was the other.

<sup>148</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume 6, item 70: Governor Hunter to the Secretary, 7 May 1711. Digital image of original

and could claim connections to the court<sup>149</sup> that surpassed any Talbot might muster. In any sort of political battle, it was a brave priest who could throw down a gauntlet in front of such a governor and hope to come out the winner.

Hunter, a firm whig, had become governor just as the whig junto in London had collapsed. His traditional sources of strong support were diminished early in his governorship, so those in New Jersey aligned with the tories saw themselves in a strong position with respect to their new governor. It appears that Talbot and his high-church colleagues were ready to seize the opportunity. And some time in 1710, they did.

As part of the planning for a return trip to England, Talbot made arrangements with the Reverend Jacob Henderson, a newly arrived SPG missionary, to supply for him at his parish in Burlington. In a long letter dated 25 February 1710/11 to the SPG,<sup>150</sup> Hunter picks up the story:

This young Gentleman [Henderson] came from England not long ago for Dover Hundred in Pensylvania; whether he disliked the People or the People him I can not tell, but he remain'd but a very Short time amongst them, and returning to Burlington in the Jerseys, Mr Talbot got him to supply his place during his absence, being come himself to New York in order to pursue a resolution he had taken of going to England.

Coll. Quarry<sup>151</sup> acquainted me that in his passage through Burlington he found that poor Congregation all in a flame, Mr Henderson it seems had thought fitt in performing divine service to leave out that Prayer in the Litany for Victory over Her Maj<sup>ties</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> And to Swift, whose satire (and willingness to use it in print) was another kind of power.

<sup>150</sup> Hunter was a member of the society, having joined in June 1709. Lustig, Robert Hunter, 59.

<sup>151</sup> Colonel Robert Quarry (sometimes Quarry), at this time judge of the vice admiralty for Philadelphia and West Jersey, was an ardent Anglican and used every political skill he had to promote the church in Pennsylvania to the detriment of the Quakers. He would have had no political reason to side with Hunter and would have had many reasons to be sympathetic to Talbot and his high-church colleagues. His report of the atmosphere in Burlington, as Hunter relates it, must be taken as factual. Edwin Tanner notes 'Though a rather subservient official, Quarry bore the reputation of being both zealous and upright'. (Edwin P. Tanner, 'The Province of New Jersey 1664–1738', Volume xxx in *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law*, New York 1908, 327.)

enemies, and the Prayer appointed to be said in time of Warr.<sup>152</sup> The choise<sup>153</sup> of that Congregation took exception at this but he gave them no other reasons for so doing, but that Mr Talbot had done so, they reply'd that having been long acquainted with Mr Talbot's exemplary life, they were willing to bear with his Scruples, but he could pretend none having formerly never omitted them. ffurther, that his would look as if that Congregation could not bear any such Prayer, which was a thing far from their hearts and intreated him to pray as he was appointed by his Superiours or that they would not willingly assist at them for the future.

Mr Quarry desir'd me to Speak with Mr Talbot on this head. I begg'd of him first to do so, and then if there was any necessity I would; he did so, and the result was that Mr Talbot went back to Burlington, and Mr Henderson came hither to go for England in his place having in charge the Secret Representation [ . . . ]

The 'Secret Representation' seems to have been a petition of formal complaint against Hunter, drawn up by Talbot, Evan Evans, and possibly William Vesey, without the governor having a chance to see it or respond to it. Vesey, the rector of Trinity Church, New York since 1697, was a prickly tory who easily initiated and aggravated political battles. He maintained a close relationship with the Earl of Clarendon, who, as Lord Cornbury, had been Hunter's predecessor and tory governor of New York and New Jersey. A profligate and amoral character, Clarendon was something of an embarrassment to the tories but useful as piece on the political chessboard.

Vesey in New York and Clarendon in England cooperated in forestalling Hunter through whispering campaigns, letters, and petitions to the bishop of London, sending on particularly choice detrimental information. Two incidences provided fodder for their reporting. The first was Hunter's repairing a decaying chapel at the fort in New York, which was depicted by Vesey as a malicious move by the governor to keep soldiers from Trinity Church (and presumably tory influences). The second incidence was a protracted situation

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<sup>152</sup> This indicates that Talbot was clearly a Jacobite, since he would not pray for the defeat of James III and must have quietly considered Queen Anne a usurper of the throne that by right should have been her brother's.

<sup>153</sup> Presumably meaning 'choice people'

on Long Island involving a rectory that a dissenting minister had occupied, probably illegally, for years. The governor's handling of the case was painted as sluggish, detrimental both to the church and the SPG missionary who was unable to move into the property.<sup>154</sup> These two instances were assuredly part of the clandestine petition of wrongs prepared against the governor.

Hunter defended himself at great length in his letter to the SPG of February 1711/12, justifying his conduct and actions in those matters. He suggested that if there were clergy who had complaints about him, there were others who found secretive plotting against him unacceptable.

The hapless Jacob Henderson, having been turned out of Burlington once Talbot scrapped his trip to England, seems to have been caught somewhat in the middle and played to each side as he needed to, as Hunter describes:

Since the writing of what is above, some incidents have chang'd the Scituation of affairs in Some measure, Mr Henderson haveing industriously showed about a Letter of Mr Talbotts accusing the Reverend Mr St Clare Missionary in Pensylvania of haveing run away with the Landlords Wife; Mr St Clare upon his arrival here took out a writte against him [Talbot] for defamation, and Mr Henderson being advised of it returned to Pensylvania.

The inclosed letter from Coll. Quarry to Capt. Gordon will sufficiently inform you of the Malice of that report. I shall only acquaint you that the Gentlewoman is bound for England with leave from her Husband, who spoke to Capt. Gordon for a passage for her when he was there, whether the report was in Order to prevent his goeing to England or to take off the force of what he might represent at home in relation to the Affairs of that Province I shall not determine, but must affirm that there was neither prudence not Xtianity in the propagating of it on so slender grounds.

This affair however gave me time to convocate the Clergy, to whom I spoke as in the paper mark'd A: and the next day their Answer marked B: which I think sufficiently clears me of any Sug-

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<sup>154</sup> The so-called Poyer case. See *Antiquities of the Parish Church, Jamaica*, by Henry Onderdonk Jr (1880) for a full treatment of the matter. It dragged out for year and occupies a vast number of pages in the SPG letters and minutes.

gestions to my disadvantage in that Representation, which it seems is still to remain a Secrett for reasons best known to themselves: the Reverend Mr Bridges when it was presented to him ask't if the Governour had seen it, and being told no, he refus'd to sign it. Mr Mackensie and Mr Thomas told me that had they foreseen the use that was intended to be made of it and its consequences, they would ever have signed it, the latter using this expression, that he would sooner have burned his hand to a stump then have signed it, those and some others have owned that there was a one Representation in direct forms against me offer'd to them which they rejected with scorn.

Hunter's allusion to 'Mr St Clare'<sup>155</sup> and his inappropriate attachment reveals that Talbot and Evans had drawn up accusations against Sinclair, apparently on the basis of hearsay and rumour. As Hunter wrote, Robert Quarry was disturbed enough by the incident to write a lengthy letter to one Captain Gordon (which Hunter enclosed with his), which was to be carried to England in Gordon's ship and given to the SPG and possibly to the bishop of London. In his letter, Quarry writes of remonstrating seriously with Evans and Talbot

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<sup>155</sup> Sinclair, more usually. Despite being married with a family in England, the Reverend Robert Sinclair had come over as a missionary in 1709 at age twenty-four on the same ship that brought Robert Hunter to his new province as governor. The ship was delayed at Spithead for some days before sailing, and Sinclair wrote a strangely naive letter to the SPG:

'We arrived at Spithead twelve days ago where Col. Hunter came on Bord in order to sail proceed on his Voyage to New York, but by reason of contrary winds and very tempestuous weather we continue still here ready to embrace the first opportunity of a fair wind; it is uncertain whether we shall come to an anchor at any other Port in England, her Majtys Ship Leopard having joined us here, as Convoy for three or four hundd off land. There is a Box of small Tracts to be dispersed, sent Bord the Lowstoffe and directed for me, but for whose use I know not, having received no manner of Instructions about them therefore a Solution of this point, together with your sound advice relating to my Conduct and behaviour, amongst an irregular Croud, will be very acceptable, Sir, Your most humbl Servant Robt Sinclair, On Bord the Lowestoff', 14 March 1709/10' (*American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume 5, item 81: Mr Sinclair to the Secretary, 14 March 1709/10. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 21 June 2011.)

The Lowestoffe finally arrived in New York on 16 June 1710, where for four weeks the unlucky Sinclair was ill. Once arriving in Newcastle where he was to serve, he became seriously ill again. By January 1710/11 he was writing the bishop of London to plead for a transfer, having continually been plagued by 'fevers and ague' and 'weakning distemper'. Sinclair returned to England in 1711/12 under dubious circumstances and remained there.

about what he saw as their hasty conclusions and inappropriate actions to the detriment of a fellow missionary and reports their promise to behave more properly in the future.

Disentangling the complexities of personality clashes, whig-tory politics, and behind-the-scenes plotting is difficult when most of the evidence is missing. What is important in these confusing incidents is what they reveal about Talbot. He could develop warm and confiding friendships with those he respected and he would occasionally manoeuvre those relationships into a counterweight against whig authority and power. Talbot's political instincts were not always accurate and he seems often to have overestimated what was feasible. Since every missionary was a channel of information to the SPG in their required twice-yearly reports, those who felt bitter or spurned by Talbot could easily relay unflattering and prejudicial information. That steady drip of letters could add to the credibility of reports of governors, no matter how their politics aligned (or didn't align) with the majority of the SPG or with the bishop of London.

Having abandoned the idea of a trip to England — perhaps on the fear that his parish would suffer under the callow Henderson or that he himself might be forbidden to return to America by the SPG — Talbot was once again in Burlington in the first quarter of 1711/12. He resumed his round of ministry centred at Burlington, but as usual he travelled frequently to parishes in Pennsylvania and in New Jersey that were without a missionary. During this period, he grew closer to Evan Evans, whom he had known since his arrival in America in 1702.

In many instances, they would act as quasi-official archdeacons over the other missionaries, advising them and from time to time directing them in their labours. And Evans and Talbot would occasionally write joint letters to the SPG with their recommendations for which missionaries could best serve where. That suggests that the SPG respected Talbot's opinion about conditions on the ground, if aggravated at times by his broad-sword zeal.

The combined Talbot-Evans force irked some of their fellow missionaries. George Ross wrote to the SPG on 22 January 1711/12.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume 7, item xx: Mr Ross to Mr Chamberlayne, 22 January 1711/12. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 24 March 2010.)

This goes by Mr Sinclair who perhaps would have stay'd longer in America had his Lott but fallen in any other place, beside New Castle. If some according to their wanted Method of accusing the Brethren, will dare to asperse his manners, let me intreat you not to be easy of beliefe in such matters Considering what little reason you have to depend upon what Jealously, peevishness, or fear may suggest. [. . .]

I hope Mr Evans has don[e] with me long time, I assure you I have endeavoured to make good my promises to the Society with respect to a good Correspondence with him. If he sticks to his old Trade of informing, I know who will not scruple to set him out in his proper Colours. He has treated Colonel Gookin so inhumanely that he has strangely Exposed himself to the Indignation of all men.

Mr Humphreys threatens I understand to Complain of Mr Sinclair for finding of fault with a piece of his Latin, and for any thing I know he and Talbot who generally acts like a man in a Frenzy, is at this very Minute framing some plausible Storys ag<sup>t</sup>. these whom they are obliged to, and particularly against Mr Sinclare. Tis suprizinge to me what can possess two or three of our Clergy in this Countrey perpetually to cabel together without takeing the least Notice of the rest of the Brethren. To explain myself I mean the private Meetings of Mr Evans and Mr Talbot who Consult and write about the Concerns of their Brethren without their knowledge. These men act like Spyes, and not like fellow Presbyters. May God in his wise providence send us a man that is a Bishop indeed that we may be delivered from these and such like Presbyter Episcopelians [sic].

The 'storys' were indeed plausible. Sinclair appears to have misbehaved badly in some way, whether with his landlord's wife or through some other transgression, for George Ross admitted as much in a letter of 15 May 1712 to the SPG.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume 7, page 511: Letter from Mr Ross to Mr Chamberlain, 15 May 1712. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 21 June 2010.



My last to you I sent by Mr St Clare whose deportment during the latter part of the time he stay'd in this Countrey has given great occasion to our Enemies to reproach the Sacred Character he bore. Had I known what I do now I would have saved myself the trouble of writing in his favour.

In this instance, Talbot, the 'man in a Frenzy', has become a justly outraged missionary appalled by the behaviour of a fellow pries, suggesting that Talbot and Evans were clearly effective 'Spyes' for the SPG.

Later in 1711, Talbot urged the society to acquire a choice property in Burlington that could serve as an episcopal residence. Governor Hunter became enthusiastic about the house and acted as intermediary for the SPG and, after a series of lengthy negotiations, on 29 October 1712<sup>158</sup> for six hundred pounds, the house was theirs.<sup>159</sup> Having acquired a house, Talbot likely assumed that, with Queen Anne's strong support for the church abroad, it wouldn't be long before there was a bishop in it. He couldn't have been more wrong.

The death of Bishop Compton in 1713 was only the first of several enormous changes to come. Queen Anne's death in 1714 and the consequent complexity of succession pushed the matter of an American bishop to the background.

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<sup>158</sup> 'Burlington House' or 'Point House' (or some variation of these) was nothing but trouble from the beginning. Before Hunter had closed on the property on behalf of the SPG—but after the money had been transferred—the house suffered severe damage from a fire from the 'fowleness of the chimneys'. The repairs were nearly a third of the purchase price. (*American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Volume x, item 19: John Talbot and Evan Evans to the Secretary, 30 June 1712. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 21 June 2010.)

<sup>159</sup> It was also in Hunter's interest to do so, as it provided him with an appropriately grand residence when he was in Burlington for the meetings of the assembly. Some claimed, as wildly improbable as it seems, that he might have imagined himself being appointed the first bishop for the colonies. It's far more likely that he hoped his friend, Jonathan Swift, then Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, might be appointed. Swift had been keen on being 'Bishop of Virginia', but presumably Hunter thought he could be swayed to Jersey. See Hunter's letter to Swift, in Lustig's *Robert Hunter*, 110.

*'In the snare of the Hunter'*

**D**uring Anne's reign, the tensions between tories and whigs amongst her ministers and in Parliament—and the rise and fall and rise of each party in power—were reflected in the colonies. The politics of power generally worked themselves out in the means by which New Jersey was governed and financed. From 1710, when Hunter arrived and the whigs fell, until the death the queen in 1714, there was continuing tension in the New Jersey assembly, most of which had to do with blocking what were seen as Hunter's whiggish initiatives or with weakening his power base.

Hunter was a canny and clever politician who could assess the political chess-board and was often able to work out compromises in his best interest. He could and did vent his spleen about the cost of these battles in long, emotional diatribes to the Board of Trade, and his detailed analyses of events provide an historical record of his position in the day-to-day life of politically turbulent New Jersey. He had grown wary (and weary) of his high-church clergy and particularly of Talbot, whom he saw as their leader. On Talbot's part, he must not have realised that in the incidents with Jacob Henderson and Robert Sinclair, as well as the failed 'Secret Representation', he had damaged his relationship with Hunter nearly beyond repair.

Francis Nicholson,<sup>160</sup> the lieutenant governor of New York under Hunter, was pulled into the various spats between the clergy and Hunter. As a man of high-church views, long devoted to the church in his lengthy service in various colonies in America, he was naturally aligned to the Vesey-Talbot

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<sup>160</sup> General [later Sir] Francis Nicholson (1655–1728), was a career military man and enthusiastic supporter of the SPG and the interests of the established church. He spent most of his life in America, beginning as lieutenant governor of New England (when it included New York), twice as governor of Virginia, lieutenant governor of Newfoundland, and lastly governor of South Carolina. A founder of the College of William and Mary in Virginia, his temperament was high church and his politics were Tory. Talbot indicates in a letter to the SPG he first met Nicholson in Virginia. Nicholson, who never married, left almost his entire estate to the society.

faction.<sup>161</sup> In 1712 Nicholson secured two positions that gave him (at least theoretical) power over Hunter: He was commissioned as an overseer of all colonial governors, in civil and military matters, and he was appointed as a sort of 'spiritual inspector' for the SPG, to report on the state of the church and its missionaries in North America.

If Nicholson was a firm friend of Talbot's during this time, so was Catharine Bovey, his early and influential supporter in Fretherne. Recall that Bishop Frampton had in his will earmarked one-hundred pounds for the support of a minister propagating the Gospel in America. Frampton had died in 1708 and the legacy had not yet been fulfilled. The bishop of London, Henry Compton, who through the will had been given the power to direct the legacy, wrote Mrs Bovey in February 1712/13. She replied:<sup>162</sup>

Feb: 20<sup>th</sup>: 1712-13

Sir

I very readily answer the request you was pleased to make me, that this certain account, that Bishop Frampton gave in his Will, one Hundred pound, toward propagating the Gospel in America, [is] to be disposed of for that purpose by the sole appointment Henry, Bp of London.<sup>163</sup> The Copie of the Will, is not in Town, but if it is wanted I can very easily send for it. Pardon me for the impertinence of wishing the Bishop of London might direct the purchasing somewhat with the money, that may be perpetual, to the church of Burlington; it would preserve the memory of the Bishop's gift, (which was a generous bequest out of the little he had

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<sup>161</sup> Talbot had been an admirer of Nicholson since his time in Virginia, when Nicholson was then governor of that colony and Talbot was there in some capacity.

<sup>162</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the C series letter books, 1635-1812, Box 14 item 63*; Mrs Bovey to Bishop Compton, 20 February 1712/13 1709. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 2 July 2011.

<sup>163</sup> The actual language of Frampton legacy is 'I give and bequeath the sum of one hundred pounds for the Encouragement of Ministers to Propagate the Gospell in the Western Plantations according to the Order of the Church of England which money my Will is shall be disposed of according to the direction and appointment of the Right Reverend Father in God Henry the present Bishop of London' The original will is at the National Archives: TNA/PRO/Prob 11/504

left to bequeath) and besides that a Gentleman that was once his chaplain<sup>164</sup> will have the present Benefit, if Mr Talbot is still living and Rector of that place. It is I believe four years since the money ought to have been paid, be please to use your interest that it may now be settled which would be a great satisfaction to

Your obliged humble servant

Cath: Bovey

John Chamberlayne, the secretary of the SPG, wrote further to Mrs Bovey enquiring about the executors of Frampton's will. She replied on 4 March 1712/13<sup>165</sup>:

Sir

Mr John Kemble a Clergy man that was Chaplain to Bishop Frampton, and Mr Jos[iah] Jenner are his executors.

Pardon me if I cannot think it a good disposition of Bishop Frampton's Lecasy if it is made part of the purchase money of the House you mention as already contracted for by Governor Hunter; it would surely better answer his intentions if it was applied towards purchasing somewhat that might be perpetual to some church in America, the Minister of such church to have the Benefit. If Burlington is thought sufficiently provided for, any other Church where the minister has a less provision is the same thing. I make no question but the Queen will on sending a Bishop take care of his character by a Revenue sufficient to Provide a House, and therefore cannot think that the disposing of B<sup>p</sup> Frampton's money that way, will answer his purpose of Propagating the Gospell in America. I once more ask your pardon for this and beg your interest towards this money being settled in the manner I wish it would bee & esteemed a very great obligation to

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<sup>164</sup> There is no evidence that Talbot was ever Frampton's chaplain, but the fact that Bovey thought so suggests they were close. In her second letter to Compton, she mentions the Reverend John Kemble was a chaplain to Frampton as well, perhaps a correction of her first letter.

<sup>165</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the C series letter books, 1635-1812, Box 14, item 63: Mrs Bovey to Bishop Compton, 20 February 1712/13. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 2 July 2011.*

Your faithful & humble servant  
Cath: Bovey

4th March 1712-13

I was very much concerned that I was from home when your Lady  
and niece did me the favour of a visit

Bovey was an astute as well as wealthy woman who had been in control of a large estate since she was widowed at age twenty-two. She felt no compunction in pointing out that the proposed use of the money didn't meet the terms of the legacy and that the purchase of a house wasn't the propagation of the Gospel. The Frampton legacy was eventually conveyed to St Mary's Church in Burlington, where Talbot and his vestry used the funds to purchase a glebe for the parish.

If Talbot was secure in his high-church stronghold of Burlington, he was less so out of it. Despite the occasional successful manoeuvring of the Tories and high-church clergy to weaken Hunter — with the goal of removing him — the governor was intransigent. Hunter bided his time in 1713, doing what he could to bolster his power base through patronage and appointments, and sensing that the Tory majority in London might be splintering. He was fortunate that the ecclesiastical hierarchy was mostly Whig. Henry Compton, bishop of London, generally sided with Hunter and advised him to be patient, so for the time, Hunter was secure. And Talbot was also secure, for a time, as Hunter's particular clerical opponent was Vesey. Since Hunter was often distracted by that 'sower Jacobite' (his description of Vesey), Talbot for a while was able to avoid prosecution, although he was always identified by Hunter as one of the ringleaders of the clerical pack of high-church hounds nipping at his heels.

In late 1713 matters began to skew in Hunter's favour. His attempt to remove some of his key opponents on the New Jersey council and replace them with Whig supporters was approved in London.<sup>166</sup> One of the bills passed by the assembly in December 1713 allowed Quakers to serve on juries, omitting the requirement that they take oaths before such service. This particularly inflamed the clergy, who saw it as a slight to the church. Over the next few

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<sup>166</sup> One of the displaced councillors was Daniel Cox[e], ardent Tory, proprietor of West Jersey, quondam physician to Queen Anne, and a member of Talbot's parish in Burlington. After being dismissed from the council, Cox[e] promptly ran for the assembly and was elected.

years, a long series of complaints and petitions of grievances about the Quakers' 'right to affirm' issued forth to the SPG from the clergy, Talbot, and St Mary's parish. Talbot complained bitterly to Robert Nelson, his long time supporter, in two private letters<sup>167</sup> of late summer 1713, where his impatience with those in England ignorant of the conditions in America is clear and his dislike of Hunter is clearer.

In the letters, Talbot refers to the fall of 'that pillar', Henry Compton, bishop of London, who died in early July 1713. Compton was succeeded by John Robinson and, for reasons now unclear, Robinson thoroughly disliked Hunter. This proved a useful check to Hunter's growing confidence that he could safely harry the high-church clergy in his domain.

But with the death of another 'pillar', Queen Anne on 1 August 1714, Talbot and the high-church clergy could no longer look for strong support from the crown and the succession of George I effectively ended any realistic hope of the return of a Stuart to the throne. A more personal loss to Talbot came in January 1714/15, with the death of the great and good Robert Nelson, one of Talbot's strongest supporters and perhaps one of the few in London in whom he could confide. And the moderate and sensible Nelson may have served as a check to Talbot's often extreme reactions to anything he saw as a slight to the church. With Nelson's death, that check was gone.

Despite the fact that the new bishop of London, John Robinson, was generally able to shield and protect his clergy from much of Hunter's malice, Hunter began to attack Talbot directly. Nowhere did that become more pronounced than in a nasty and drawn-out political battle that began in 1715 and carried on into 1717. In this, the matter of oaths was used as a weapon against Talbot. A letter of 9 April 1715<sup>168</sup> from Hunter to the Board of Trade may have been the first formal salvo:

Mr. Talbot has incorporated the Jacobites in ye Jerseys under the name of a Church in order to sanctify his sedition and insolence to ye Government. That stale pretence is now pretty much discuss'd. And I am easy and shall make them so in spite of themselves. Cox,

<sup>167</sup> Both are transcribed in full in Appendix 3.

<sup>168</sup> 'America and West Indies: April 1715', *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 28: 1714-1715 (1928), pp. 141-161. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=73960> Date accessed: 22 August 2009.

Griffith, and Basse are his main props. If ye Society take not more care for ye future then has been taken hitherto in ye choice of their missionaries, instead of establishing Religion they'll destroy all Government and good maners, etc.

The letter travelled unusually swiftly to London and was received by the Board of Trade on 16 May, read on 21 May, forwarded to the bishop of London, and presented to the SPG at their 1 July meeting. On 23 August, the SPG formally asked Talbot to defend himself, which he would do in a reply later that autumn. For the period, this was a blindingly rapid series of actions.<sup>169</sup>

Some time during summer 1715, at the height of the battles between Hunter and the clergy, the clergy planned to appoint a representative to travel to London to convince Bishop Robinson that Hunter had exceeded his authority and to request that the bishop use all his power to force the governor's resignation. Initially Talbot was chosen to be the emissary, but Francis Nicholson, Talbot's supporter and sharp-eyed tory, worried that the SPG might not agree to his returning to America if he travelled without their permission. And the shortness of time appears to have prevented the exchange of necessary correspondence. So William Vesey<sup>170</sup> was appointed in Talbot's stead, leaving at the beginning of July.

Hunter wrote to the Board of Trade in October 1715:

The Bishop of London I hear has appointed Mr. Vesey his Commissary here, at least he writes soe to his freinds. I hope his Lord<sup>pp</sup>. has also constituted Talbott his Commissary for the Jerseys, and Phillips for Pensilvania, these being the three Clergymen mention'd in mine to my Lord Staires, and then I shall know what he means, the best on't is, that though I know noe good they have ever done I know noe great hurt they can doe at present.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>169</sup> With the uncertainty of the speed of delivery of postal mail between England and America (absent evidence) it's best to assume a three to nine-month lag between an event, the receipt of correspondence, and a subsequent reply.

<sup>170</sup> Vesey was not an SPG missionary. His appointment and stipend were in the control of the parish.

<sup>171</sup> 'America and West Indies: October 1715, 1-13', *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 28: 1714-1715 (1928), pp. 291-314. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=73969>, accessed 9 September 2010.

Presumably Hunter preferred his enemies to be in public positions where they could be more easily attacked. Hunter made his feelings clear when he wrote to the SPG in November:

Since I arriv'd here the Revd. Mr. Vesey came hither with a letter from my Lord of London acquainting me that his Lor<sup>p</sup>. had constituted him his Commissary in these parts and had directed him as such to inquire into the truth of what I have wrote heretofore in relation to Mr. Talbot and his Congregation. It is notorious to ev'rybody on this side that in the late reign there was a plot laid and measures concerted between Mr. Talbot, Mr. Vesey and Mr. Nicolson for my utter ruine. I have seen a letter under Mr. Talbot's own hand that he was to have gone to London but that Mr. Vesey when at Boston had agreed wt<sup>h</sup> Mr. Nicolson that he should be the man.<sup>172</sup>

The 'evidence' Hunter presented to the SPG was the text of two letters of Talbot's, one to Ann Walker, George Keith's daughter (who had lived in Virginia since the 1690s), and a second to John Urmstone, an SPG missionary then in North Carolina.<sup>173</sup>

Although the letters may not have been quite the damning documents Hunter suggests, they reflect the spirited contest between the parties and prove Hunter's ruthlessness, since he apparently enlisted spies who did not scruple to steal postal mail. The personal letters—rare Talbot survivals worth transcribing in full—follow.

Hunter writes:

The first is addressed to Mrs Anne Walker at James River Virginia and dated at Burlington July 17 [1715].

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<sup>172</sup> 'America and West Indies: November 1715, 1-15', *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 28: 1714-1715 (1928), pp. 327-344. <http://british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=73971>, accessed 22 August 2009.

<sup>173</sup> 'America and West Indies: November 1715, 1-15', *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 28: 1714-1715 (1928), pp. 327-344. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=73971&strquery=urmstone hunter>, accessed 4 April 2010. Although the letter is collegial, Urmstone later turned on Talbot and became his one of his primary accusers in the matter of his nonjuring consecration.



‘I had the favour of 2 letters from you wch are always welcome to me and my Friends. Your Friend Jonathan is not fallen before the Philistins but hopes in God to see them fall before him and that in a little time. Genl Nicolson has promis’d to be here in the fall and then he says he will make us all easy. He would not Consent to my going home without leave of our Society least I should not come again, But Bro’ Vesey ye Rector of Trinity Church at New York is fled before the Philistins, he has gott the Generals letters ‘tis now 3 weeks ago since he Sail’d, God Speed him well and then No More Need go upon that account. Now there’s no Minister of our Church at New York but we serve it by turns, next month I shall be there. Meanwhile I have Enough to do to Keep the peace of the Churches at Philada and New York we have so many Adversarys without and within but Never fear your friend Jonathan will never yeild to ‘em so long as he has the Grace of God and the prayers of the Sts. We are going to open a New Church at N. Bristol over against Burlington which I Intend to nominate St Ann’s or St Margt’s more for the Sake of your good family then any other of that Name that I know—’

This is letter for letter as it stands in his Epistle. That w<sup>ch</sup> Follows, in like maner in his own hand is directed

‘To The Revd Mr John Urmston missioner in N<sup>th</sup> Carolina to be left at Mr Blackamores in Virginia, dated Philadelphia July 17—

I thought you had been dead in that dismal Swamp where there is hardly anything that is good. As for those things that you send here for, I would send them with all my heart but since you design to Remove, the best way is to come soon here are several Churches vacant that you may serve and I will Ingage my Intrest with the Society that they shall allow your Sellary. General Nicolson sent a letter here last post that He would be here in the fall, I can do anything with Him and He with the Society. Mr Vesey is fled for Persecution from New York So that Church is destitute at Present only the Missionarys serve it by Turns. Next week we are going all hands to Open the Church at New Bristol over against Burlington I have sent to the Society for a Missionary for that and Hopewell but

first come first serv'd. Therefore make the best of your way'.<sup>174</sup>

By producing these letters, Hunter no doubt presumed he could use his relationship with the Board of Trade to pressure the bishop of London and effectively silence Talbot and Vesey. To a large extent, his strategy succeeded.

Talbot's animosity towards Hunter continued unabated throughout 1715, but he became aware that he was dealing with a political opponent whose skill and power were greater than his and an opponent who was backed by the return of a whig majority in London. Occasionally Talbot would achieve what he saw as a victory—with the permission of the Governor of Pennsylvania, Sir William Keith, he was appointed temporary rector at Christ Church, Philadelphia in 1715, when the rector, Evan Evans, was in London—but in general Hunter managed to hold the upper hand.

Throughout 1714 and 1715 in London there was a widespread worry of 'a Jacobite under every bed' and disaffected and nonjuring clergy were particular targets of suspicion. With regard to Hunter's charge of incorporating Jacobites into a church, Talbot responded to the bishop of London on 21 October 1715:<sup>175</sup>

I am sorry I should be accused of sedition in my old age<sup>176</sup> after I have travelled more than any body to keep the peace in church and state. My Lord, please to ask Mr. Secretary Hall<sup>177</sup> and he will tell you that I was a Williamite from the beginning. Let them consult the admiralty office and they will find I took all the oaths that were necessary to qualify me for the service which I have performed faithfully abroad and at home. As soon as I have time I will call the Church together to answer for themselves and me too to the illustrious Society for propagating the Gospel, &c.

Meanwhile the Lord rebuke that evil spirit of lying and slander

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<sup>174</sup> Certainly this letter suggests there was no bad feeling on Talbot's part to Urmstone, rather the opposite.

<sup>175</sup> Hills, *History*, 142.

<sup>176</sup> Talbot was then 46 years old, which makes 'old age'—even given an eighteenth-century understanding of age—seem a bit overstated.

<sup>177</sup> Unidentified

that is gone out against the Church. Here and there they spare none. I suffer like my Lord and Master between two at Philadelphia and New York, but God has been my succour and I doubt not but he will still deliver me from the snare of the Hunter.

Talbot was being slightly casuistical in the matter of oaths, as the oaths he had taken hitherto did not involve abjuration. One historian has commented: 'Few or none however, who had taken the oath of allegiance, refused this additional cup of bitterness'<sup>178</sup> — but Talbot did. The great lengths to which he went to avoid the 1715 oath make it clear that he was a firm 'non-abjurer', as well as the earlier evidence from 1710 that in his parish at Burlington he would not pray for the defeat of the crown's enemies.

In 1716, Daniel Cox, Talbot's parishioner (whose enmity for Hunter was conceivably greater than Talbot's) continued to circulate petitions with various assertions and charges. Meetings of the assembly were used as pressure points, with Cox and Bass arguing for the assembly to meet in Burlington, where their influence was stronger. Hunter usually managed to deflect the manoeuvres. The antagonism between the two grew so great that Hunter charged Cox with interfering with the business of government and invoked the words 'conspiracy, sedition, and treason'. Such ominous charges from the governor eroded Cox's support and he removed to Pennsylvania for a time, but Hunter now expected it was like that Cox, Talbot, and their 'faction', as he put it, would go to London to complain of him and his administration.

Matters came to a head in May 1716, when Hunter asked and received from the council a *Dedimus Potestatem* to be served on Talbot:<sup>179</sup>

May ye 21<sup>st</sup> 1716

To the High Sheriff of the County of Burlington

Greeting

With this you will receive a *Dedimus potestam* to administer the

<sup>178</sup> Henry Hallam, *The constitutional history of England from the accession of Henry VII to the death of George II*, Volume III, London 1854, 194.

<sup>179</sup> *Archives of the State of New Jersey*, First Series, Vol. XIV, 'Documents relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey', Volume II 1715–1738, 18. A second *Dedimus* followed for Jeremiah Bass on 22 May. Bass was jailed for a time.

Oaths to John Talbot a Presbyter or pretending to be a Presbyter of the Church of England. You are therefore as soon as may be after the receipt of these to Tender unto the said John Talbot the Oaths mentioned in the said *Dedimus* to you Directed. And if he refuses to take the said Oaths & Subscribe the Test and abjuration as there Directed You are to Signifie unto him that he forbear the Exercise of his Ministerial function as he will answer the Contrary at his peril. You are also in Case of refusal as aforesaid To apprehend the said John Talbot and him in Safe Custody to keep until he Enter into Recognizance before Some one of his Ma<sup>ties</sup> Justices of the peace with two Sufficient Securities in the sum of Two Hundred pounds to be of the Good behaviour During the time of his residence Stay or abiding in this province. And this Shall be yo<sup>r</sup> Sufficient Warrant, of which you are not to fail as you will Answer the Contrary at your Peril.

By Order of the Governor and Council, In Council the Day and Year abovesaid

Ja: Smith Cl Con

There is no surviving evidence that the *Dedimus* was served or that Talbot took the oaths in summer 1716. Talbot often adopted the strategy of moving between New Jersey and Pennsylvania as he needed, to avoid a particularly nasty political imbroglio. At this time he decamped to Bristol, Pennsylvania (where he had helped found and occasionally served the parish of St James) and then to Philadelphia. Bass and Cox, who had crossed to Pennsylvania as well, were expelled from the assembly because of their absence. Writs for new elections shortly followed.

By June 1716, Hunter was confident that he had routed his high-church enemies. His unwillingness to bend under what political pressure the clergy could bring and his use of all legal means to silence and harass them finally had their desired effect. He wrote<sup>180</sup> to Mr Popple, his confidante on the Board of Trade:

Mine to the Board will inform you that Cox and his pitifull crew are defeated and fled, he holds Councils in Pensilvania, at the last

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<sup>180</sup> Lustig, *Robert Hunter*, 159.

it was resolv'd that he and Talbot should go over, and apply to the house of Commons since they cannot prevaile with the King, the Min<sup>rs</sup> or the Lords ha ha ha.

I doubt he will not go after all but get in his subscription money and remaine at Philadelphia where I hear he has taken a house.

But even in Pennsylvania, there must have been concerted attempts to have Talbot swear allegiance and abjuration—or prove that he would not. In January 1716/17 any ambiguity was resolved when Charles Gookin, lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania, wrote to the SPG:<sup>181</sup>

I have some thing to offer against Mr Talbot in Conjunction with the vestrey who will be soon ready to address the Bishop of London and the Society. I must now mention to them his refusing the Oath of Allegiance to King George and the Other usuall Oaths and speaking disrespectfully of the House of Hanover and not praying for the King in the manner directed by the Church, by this means the Congregation<sup>182</sup> is much Lessened.

By September 1716—having been chastised by the SPG, alienated from Hunter, and having giving up the chimerical idea of appealing to the House of Commons—Talbot was apparently feeling some degree of regret for the bitter relationship that existed between him and the governor. During a conversation that month with George Willocks,<sup>183</sup> Talbot indicated a willingness to

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<sup>181</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Box 12 item 185; Charles Gookin to the Secretary, 7 January 1716/17. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 15 July 2011.

<sup>182</sup> Christ Church, Philadelphia, where Talbot had been serving in the absence of a rector.

<sup>183</sup> George Willocks (?1661-1729), born in Scotland, emigrated from England in 1698 and settled in Perth Amboy. He 'was appointed "Chief Ranger," whatever that may have been, also a commissioner for the court of small causes. He was deputy-surveyor of the province in 1701. During Burnet's administration he was a member of the king's council. He does not seem, however, to have been in accord with the governor; their repeated differences resulted, in 1722, in his suspension from office, being charged with acting as leader for a cabal of intriguers.' (From Andrew D. Mellick, *The story of an old farm: or, Life in New Jersey in the eighteenth century*, Part 1, 1889, 122.) In addition to being a considerable land owner, from 1719 he operated a ferry across the Raritan river to New York and established one from Perth Amboy to Staten Island. He a founder and benefactor of St. Peter's Church in Perth Amboy.

make amends with Hunter, and Willocks agreed to put him in contact with people who could arrange a meeting. Willocks, in his later deposition, suggested that Talbot was a zealous but guileless man who had been manipulated by political power brokers for their own ends.

In addition to signalling that he was open to a rapprochement with Hunter, Talbot told Willocks that shortly after Cox and Bass were expelled from the assembly he became aware of potentially violent plot directed against the Quakers.<sup>184</sup> The plot involved setting fire to their meeting-house in Burlington, along with private residences, and it appears to have been planned for June 1716. According to Talbot, he dissuaded the unnamed ringleaders from carrying it out. And he later added that he had calmed down even more potential violence:

An old Fool asked [Talbot] at another time if they should not break all ye Quakers' glass windows for not putting out of lights; and there was an agreement amongst them if Talbot had been imprisoned to have pulled down the gaol, which [Talbot] told them he would prevent by leaving ye province.<sup>185</sup>

Whatever the degree of Talbot's zeal, he drew a line at violence.

In January 1716/17, Talbot talked further with Willocks and agreed to confess to Hunter what he knew of the plot, perhaps as a part of his desire for an overall reconciliation.

Early spring 1716/17 had Talbot removing from Philadelphia (where he had been all winter),<sup>186</sup> returning to Burlington, and making arrangements to

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The information about Talbot's contrition and his later role in stopping a plot to destroy Quaker property in Burlington comes from a formal deposition of George Willocks, made on 21 May 1717. See Cecil Headlam (editor), 'America and West Indies: May 1717, 16-31,' *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 29: 1716-1717, British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=74007>

<sup>184</sup> Quakers were both Hunter supporters and, as noted earlier, newly empowered to serve on juries and in other official capacities, as the requirement to take the traditional oath to God had been waived.

<sup>185</sup> Deposition of George Willocks, 21 May 1717.

<sup>186</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Box 12 item 189; Charles Gookin to the Secretary, 16 March 1716/17. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 15 July 2011.

travel to New York to see the governor. In a contrite letter from Perth Amboy on 3 April 1717,<sup>187</sup> Talbot wrote:

May it please y<sup>r</sup> Ex<sup>cy</sup>

I had the favour of yor Excy Letter this Morning wch I might have answered sooner if I had it but I could not come sooner unless I had left all the Churches destitute from Philada to this place.

I can provide to yor Excy what ever I had said, or what ever is said of me that I have done no harm in your Province but have prevented a great Deal that would have bin done by others had I consented to it. I am for peace wth all men especially Govrs & peticularly to yor Excy. I hope always to approve myself a dutiful Subject.

There is no Minister for next Sunday so my Good ffriend Mr Willikes<sup>188</sup> &<sup>c</sup> have prevailed wth me to stay till Monday. Then God willing nothing shall hinder me from waiting upon your Excy at New York. I have no other business & nothing could have Called me so far from my Church this Lent, but to make it appear that I am,

Yor most humble & dutifull Servant  
John Talbot

After the meeting, the white-hot anger that existed between Hunter and Talbot cooled somewhat. But in July, when Hunter reviewed the sorry history of the last few years in a letter to Ambrose Phillips, the Board of Trade's representative in New York, he still fastened on Talbot as a ringleader. After complaining of Daniel Cox's behaviour from the very first year Hunter arrived in the province, Hunter wrote that Cox joined up with the high-church clergy, who

rung the peal of the Churches danger,<sup>189</sup> under the auspicious

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<sup>187</sup> 'Administrations of Governor Robert Hunter and President Lewis Morris, 1709-1720' in *Documents relating to the colonial history of the State of New Jersey*, ed. William Whitehead, *Archives of the State of New Jersey*, First Series, Vol. iv, Newark 1881, 291.

<sup>188</sup> George Willocks

<sup>189</sup> 'The Church in danger' was a cry associated with the high-church clergy, indicating that

influence of the nonjuring Mr. Talbot, lowder than ever it had been rung in England, and indeed their whole conduct was but an echo to that on the other side. If there should be any doubt of this, Mr. Smith the Secretary of the Jerseys may be interrogated upon oath in what manner and in what terms Mr. Cox told him, long before the Pretender's landing, that he was at the head of 50,000 men in Scotland, and Mr. Flower the Postmaster of Philadelphia shall take his oath to the following words spoke by Mr. Cox upon reading the votes or resolves of the Lords, relating to the Treaties of Commerce, "By God these whig Lords will never be quiet till twenty of their heads are struck off".<sup>190</sup>

Through his zeal to defend the prerogatives of the church, Talbot had allowed himself to be pulled into what Hunter saw, probably justly, as a jacobite cabal. The sharp tensions between whig governor and tory clergy reached the breaking point, pushed by political power brokers such as Cox and Bass. Hunter was a man who wouldn't be pushed without pushing back harder.

Cox and Bass came out of the battles of 1715–1717 with their power circumscribed, but still holding on to positions of influence in the province. Talbot survived Hunter's attacks, but he was scarred by the encounter. And his correspondence to the SPG shows he was, at last, growing weary after more than fifteen years in America and discouraged at the prospect of ever attaining a resident bishop.

In addition to an illusory bishop, Talbot had to deal with the quite real Point House, the *soi-disant* bishop's residence in Burlington, whose purchase he had engineered in 1712. By 1719 it had deteriorated and was in danger of being beyond repair. (As early as 1715, Talbot was using it as a place to store his books 'because nobody would occupy it without being paid for the trouble'.) By this time it was unlikely that a bishop would ever live in the dwelling. The SPG was told in 1720 (a mere nine years after purchase) the 'outhouses were old and leaky, the cellar was rotten, the underpinning had decayed, that

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the rights and privileges of the Church of England were being threatened by a whig majority and latitudinarian bishops.

<sup>190</sup> Cecil Headlam (editor), 'America and West Indies: May 1717, 16–31,' *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 29: 1716–1717, British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=74010>



everything would blow down if something were not done “speedily.”<sup>191</sup> And of course nothing was done speedily.

An empty and decaying episcopal residence symbolised the state of Talbot’s hopes after almost two decades of pleading for a bishop.

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<sup>191</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Box 14, item 34: The State and Condition of Burlington House (from Talbot), 1720. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 24 March 2010.

*Another return to England, another petition for a bishop*

**I**n 1715, as the political roils between Hunter and his high-church colonial clergy were heating up, Thomas Tenison, who had been Archbishop of Canterbury since 1695, died. A strong supporter of the SPG, he left a bequest of one-thousand pounds in his will for the support of two bishops in America. Realistic enough to know that the arrival of those bishops might be far in the future, Tenison directed that the interest on the sum could be used to support an English clergyman of the province of Canterbury who had served as a missionary in America but who could no longer remain there because of age, disability, injuries, or illness.

Some time in 1717, after the conclusion of the protracted fight with Hunter, Talbot began to take steps claim the Tenison interest on the grounds specified in the will. That meant a return to England, a requirement of the legacy. It also suggests that Talbot, at least initially, considered leaving America forever. (As with his earlier confused leave-taking from Fretherne, this exodus has its perplexing aspects.)

Why did Talbot choose this time to leave? Possibly because a letter from the SPG dated 2 August 1717<sup>192</sup> (likely arriving in autumn 1717) demanded proof that he had taken the oaths:

Rev'd Sir

The Society have received a Letter from Coll. Gookin<sup>193</sup> Lieut. Govern<sup>r</sup> of Pensilvania where he Charges you with Disaffection to the Government and refusing the Oath of allegiance to his majesty King George that you may be able to form an exact Judgment of the Charge I have give you the Gover<sup>s</sup> very words in his Letter inclosed. The Society Expect you should forthwith give your Answer thereto and if you have not already taken the Oaths to his Majesty King George & that you do without Delay, by the first

<sup>192</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Box 12 item 450: Secretary to Mr Talbott, 2 August 1717. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 15 July 2011.

<sup>193</sup> See the transcription of this letter on page XX.

Convenience Transmitt to the Society an Authentick Certificate of  
your having so done —

The letter was never answered.

Whether Talbot was tired of dodging requests to take the oaths, worn out after nearly two decades in the provinces, weakened after the Hunter battles, desirous to return to England, or some combination of all those, by late 1717 or early 1718 he was making plans to return to England, perhaps for the rest of his life. He may have thought he could continue to be ambiguous about the oaths—or the matter would be forgotten about once he was there—and still qualify as the recipient of the Tenison bequest.

In March 1718/19, Talbot drew up a formal petition to the SPG to receive the interest and to request the society take the necessary legal steps with the Court of Chancery. His own parish and thirteen of his fellow clergy endorsed his case. Further, he spearheaded the production of yet another petition addressed to ‘the Archbishops and the Bishops of England’ pleading for a bishop for America. It was signed by the wardens and vestries of Christ Church, Philadelphia and St Mary’s, Burlington.

While making his preparations for leaving, throughout 1718 and 1719 Talbot continued the slog of caring for too many infant parishes with too little money and assistance. And often what assistance there was, was of dubious quality. As is well known, many of the clergy who opted for a stint in America under the auspices of the SPG were incompetent, inadequate, or intemperate. One such was Thomas Halliday, in northern New Jersey at Perth Amboy. His volatile temper and hard drinking eventually provoked his colleagues to do everything possible to remove him from his position. Talbot, having witnessed an outburst of temper that included Halliday bashing an innkeeper with a heavy jug, was drawn into the long procedure of documenting and testifying to Halliday’s behaviour. Not surprisingly, Halliday, in a vain attempt to defend himself, accused his enemies of being jacobites.<sup>194</sup> Eventually this unappealing example of an SPG missionary was discharged.

Talbot’s last act before leaving for England, in June 1720 was to convey about a half-acre of property to Paul Watkinson, clerk of St Mary’s Church, Burlington, for just over six pounds. Whether this to assist with the cost of

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<sup>194</sup> The sad saga is well documented in surviving letters to the SPG.

the voyage or the desire to begin to acquire a glebe for the parish isn't known. But both goals were accomplished by the sale.<sup>195</sup>

Talbot arrived in England by August 1720 after a short passage. He appeared at the 16 September meeting of the SPG and 'laid before the Board' his report on the dire condition of their house at Burlington.<sup>196</sup> Daniel Cox, Talbot's long-time friend, supporter, and parishioner was in attendance at that meeting. (Whether he sailed with Talbot is unknown.) As was usual when presented with a complex matter, the board referred it to a committee.

Talbot chose not to bring forth his petition for the Tenison bequest at that September meeting. This may have been some strategy of timing, now impossible to discern, or simply the result of a too-brief period allotted him on the agenda.

At the 18 November 1720 SPG meeting, the committee reported back about Burlington House, the substance of which was uncertainty about how to proceed:

The Report of the Committee relating to the house and Lands at Burlington being read: Agreed that it be recommitted to the Committee to enquire into that affair and that Mr Talbot be desired to attend at that Committee; and give his Opinion what may be proper to be done therein.<sup>197</sup>

If the SPG had occasionally worried about the soundness of Talbot's politics, they trusted him in the matter of property. Meanwhile, he continued to bide his time in presenting his formal case for the Tenison interest. And for the next few months we lose sight of him.

The year 1720 was a momentous time for Talbot to return to England. Following the failure of the 1715 Jacobite uprising, the high-church clergy sympathetic to the Stuarts, along with their nonjuring brethren, were impossible even

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<sup>195</sup> Hills, *History*, 160

<sup>196</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Journal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Vol. IV, 1718-1724, September 1720, image 123. Digital images of original pages: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 29 June 2011.

<sup>197</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Journal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Vol. IV, 1718-1724, November 1720, image 134. Digital images of original pages: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 29 June 2011.

greater objects of suspicion and often subject to mistreatment. In 1717—the year that Colley Cibber’s viciously anti-Jacobite play ‘The Non-Juror’ made its debut—the Reverend Laurence Howel was discovered<sup>198</sup> to have written *The Case of Schism in the Church of England Truly Stated*. The book, declared to be seditious, claimed that George I was a usurper and that all that had been done in the Church of England since the deprivation of Archbishop of Canterbury William Sancroft in 1691 was illegal and uncanonical. Tried at the Old Bailey, Howel was ordered to pay a fine of five-hundred pounds, to undergo three years imprisonment, to be whipped, and stripped of his gown by the public executioner. ‘Howell heard this severe and cruel sentence undismayed; the public whipping was not inflicted; and his term of imprisonment at Newgate was shortened by his death on the 19th July 1720.’<sup>199</sup>

In addition, in 1720 the infamous South Sea bubble collapsed. In the political and economic turmoil that followed, the jacobites, with varying degrees of support from the high-church clergy, pursued secret negotiations for a return of James III. Many in favour of it argued that such an initiative had to be supported by a military invasion from abroad, among them Francis Atterbury, the bishop of Rochester and dean of Westminster (the offices were coterminous at the time). Atterbury, the most prominent of the high-church clergy, took a leading role in what could be called provocative but legal opposition to the whigs and the House of Hanover, but behind the scenes he was deeply enmeshed in the secret plotting for an invasion by James III.<sup>200</sup>

To what degree Talbot was involved with those actively seeking the overthrow of the government no surviving evidence exists to indicate. Given his uncompromising nonjuror position, it’s reasonable to assume that he took part in some of those tory coffee-house conversations, but like Atterbury he walked the line of holding a position in the established church whilst at the same time manoeuvring for the removal of the monarch who headed it.

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<sup>198</sup> ‘Non-Juring Bishops and their Ordinations’, in *Notes and Queries, Third Series*, I, April 19, [18]62, p. 312. The original source document is the eyewitness description of Howel’s trial in *The Historical Register Volume II for the Year 1717*, No. vi, 18. That article contains the text of his letter of ordination by the nonjuring bishop George Hickes.

<sup>199</sup> *ibid.*, *Notes and Queries*

<sup>200</sup> In 1722 Atterbury was arrested and formally charged. He was essentially tried for his activities through a ‘bill of pains and penalties’ brought in Parliament. Found guilty, he was stripped of his ecclesiastical office and exiled abroad for the remainder of his life.

In January 1720/21—in what appears to have been a lengthy meeting—the SPG approved its next steps with regard to Burlington House, no doubt all drafted by Talbot. They also agreed to send a missionary to Hopewell and Maidenhead, something Talbot had requested in earlier letters, the minutes noting ‘Coll Coxe having been so kind as to promise to settle some Land for the use of the Minister of those Churches for the time being’.<sup>201</sup> And finally—number 17 on the agenda—‘A Petition of the Revd Mr John Talbot late the Societys Missionary at Burlington in New Jersey in America was read’.<sup>202</sup> (Whether he was ‘attending at the door’ cannot be determined.)

Talbot does appear at the SPG meeting on 17 February 1720/21 when his petition for the interest on the Tenison bequest was formally approved. The certificate from the society noted<sup>203</sup>

The Society do recommend him as a person qualified to receive the Intrest of the Thousand pounds abovementioned his have been (as they credibly informed & do believe) by Sickness[,] infirmitie of Body contracted in the Service of the Church[,] Age & other unavoidable accidents disabled from the performance of his duty in the said place & forced to return to England, in Witness whereof the sd Society have hereunto caused to be affixed their Common Seale the 17 Day of February anno D<sup>ni</sup> 1720[/21]

On 22 April 1721, the SPG conveyed to the office of the Lord Chancellor their certificate, along with Talbot’s petition and all supporting documents, and Talbot at last received the accumulated interest and an order for all future interest.<sup>204</sup>

He still hadn’t taken the oaths.

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<sup>201</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Journal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Vol. IV, 1718–1724, January 1720/21, image 138. Digital images of original pages: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 29 June 2011.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702–1737*, Vol. 14, p. 56: Certificate in behalfe of Mr Talbot. Digital image of original document: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 15 July 2011.

<sup>204</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702–1737*, Vol. 16, pp. 48-51: Copy of the Order for Mr Talbot. Digital image of original document: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 15 July 2011.

Maddeningly, from April 1721 Talbot disappears from the records for nearly a year. At the SPG meeting in January 1721/22, almost nine months after the Tenison interest was granted, the treasurer of the SPG wondered whether Talbot's salary should be suspended, 'he having been in England above twelve Months. Ordered that the Salary of Mr Talbot be continued, he having promised the Society to return to his cure at Burlington in New Jersey in the Spring [of 1722]'.

This is puzzling. A strict construction of the requirements for receiving the Tenison interest appeared to be conditional on a missionary returning to and staying in England, disabled to some degree. That the SPG would allow Talbot to both receive the interest and yet return to his duties in New Jersey may have been singular. A few years later, the SPG refused the petition an elderly and infirm American missionary who wasn't in England on just those grounds—that he wasn't in England.<sup>205</sup>

But Talbot didn't return to Burlington in the spring. Instead, probably in the early summer of 1722, he was consecrated a bishop in the nonjuring succession.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> When the next longest-serving missionary in America, John Bartow, wrote to request that he be the recipient of the interest (after Talbot was discharged from service by the SPG), the society turned him down on the basis that he was in New York and not England and therefore wasn't eligible. Nor did they suggest that he could travel to England with his request, be granted the interest, and then return. The Talbot case is a puzzle.

<sup>206</sup> Contrary to all published biographies, he was not an elderly cleric of seventy-seven years of age, but a fifty-three year old hearty enough to plan to journey once more across the Atlantic and resume his ministry in America. H. P. K. Skipton suggests that Talbot had determined to be consecrated by the nonjurors and was planning for that before he left for England. This seems unlikely. (H. P. K. Skipton 'John Talbot: First Bishop in America', *The East and The West: A Quarterly Review for the Study of Missions*, xix, July 1921.)

### *A bishop for America: nonjuring consecration*

**T**he first evidence for Talbot's consecration occurs in the late winter of 1721/22, the very time that Talbot was promising the SPG he would return to New Jersey. In a meeting of the 'college' of nonjuring bishops (the location isn't known, but was likely to be in London), Ralph Taylor,<sup>207</sup> the oldest and most recently consecrated bishop of the group, proposed two men as bishops for America: the Reverend Dr Richard Welton<sup>208</sup> and the Reverend John Talbot.

How Ralph Taylor met John Talbot isn't known. It's unlikely that their paths crossed before 1721. Most of Taylor's life and clerical career had been in the Diocese of Worcester, at the parish of Stoke Severn. A loyal supporter of James II, during the last days of that king's reign in England, Taylor's house and barns were burnt down and he was driven from his house in Littleton. He followed the monarch to France, serving as chaplain to the 'English protestants' at Court of St Germain. In 1706, his brother Francis Taylor petitioned the government to allow Ralph Taylor to return to England for family estate and legal reasons. The petition was granted, and he returned to Worcestershire in early 1707.

Ralph Taylor's background and temperament made him an appropriate person to be a nonjuring bishop. His connections with the nonjurors, both abroad

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<sup>207</sup> Ralph Taylor (sometimes Tayler or Tayleur) (1647/48–1722), took his BA and MA from Trinity College, proceeding to BD in 1682 and a DD in 1686. He was ordained a deacon on 22 September 1672 at Fulham Palace by the bishop of London, Humfrey Henchman. (Ordination Evidence 116071, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009.) He served first at Grafton Flyford in the Diocese of Worcester, from 1678 to 1684, then at Severn Stoke. He fled England sometime in 1690 and embarked on his long nonjuring 'career'. He never married. He died 22 December 1722, having been a nonjuring bishop a little more than nine months.

<sup>208</sup> Richard Welton, a flagrant nonjuror and Jacobite, described laconically as 'this unquiet man' in the *Biographical History of England from the Revolution to the end of George I's Reign* (1806), is best remembered for commissioning a bas-relief altarpiece for his church in Whitechapel that featured a well-known whig clergyman as Judas. Welton seems to have been given to the dramatic, having brought with him to America numerous copies of the notorious altarpiece, along with '300 pounds sterling guns and fishing tackle'.



and in England, were wide. And he met the high standard for learning and scholarship that was characteristic of nearly all the nonjuring college. He was consecrated on 6 April 1721,<sup>209</sup> by Samuel Hawes, Nathaniel Spinckes, and Henry Gandy at Scroope's Court in Holborn. Hilkiah Bedford—who was a fellow at St John's, Cambridge when Talbot was a student—was consecrated by the same men at the same time.

Taylor had been a bishop a little over eight months when he made the startling suggestion to his colleagues that they consecrate two bishops for America. All (or the majority) of his colleagues rejected it, on the basis that Welton was an unfit candidate and that Talbot wasn't really a nonjuror in the church, even if he was so in the state.<sup>210</sup> They appear to reject the men rather than the concept of American nonjuring bishops as such.<sup>211</sup>

But they were likely preoccupied with far more than the question of bishops for America. In 1719, the original small group of nonjuring bishops divided into two even smaller groups, each separated from the other liturgically and theologically owing to their disagreements about incorporating earlier Catholic practices into the 1662 Church of England liturgy. The bishops who wanted to remain with an unaltered liturgy were called 'non-usagers' and it was this group that had consecrated Ralph Taylor.

By nature Taylor seems to have been scholarly and somewhat querulous. When his recommendation of Welton and Talbot was spurned, his sense of injured episcopal prerogative apparently drove him to proceed on his own.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> 'Consecration certificate of Ralph Taylor', National Archives of Scotland, CH12/12/110. His date of consecration is variously wrong in standard works of nonjuring history.

<sup>210</sup> This distinction of 'Church point' and 'State point' in the nonjuror taxonomy was an important one. The 'college' refusing Taylor's request saw Talbot as a nonjuror relative to the state, but not relative to the church. In other words, Talbot wouldn't take the oaths, but he continued to minister in the church.

<sup>211</sup> H. P. K. Skipton, 'John Talbot: First Bishop in America', *The East and The West: A Quarterly Review for the Study of Missions*, xix, (July 1921), 240. Skipton's original source is 'Notes of Bishop Brett' in the Brett Papers, part of the large collection of nonjuror materials in the Rawlinson D manuscripts at the Bodleian Library.

<sup>212</sup> Consecrations in the nonjuring line were rigorously documented, with careful notations of the names of the bishops and a record of the witnesses. A registrar kept custody of the certificates and maintained an accurate roster of consecrations. These conditions weren't met when Taylor obdurately proceeded on his own.

At age seventy-four, somewhat infirm of body (he was to die by the end of the year), he was perhaps wandering of mind as well.

Where Talbot and Welton were consecrated isn't known. If it had been a 'normal' nonjuring consecration, it was likely to have been one of their standard oratories: Scroope's Court or Richard Rawlinson's<sup>213</sup> private chapel at Gray's Inn are possibilities.

Who witnessed the consecration is unknown; it's very likely there was no one to do so. Whether Taylor consecrated Welton first and that they both proceeded to consecrate Talbot or whether Taylor acted *solus* in each instance is unknown. Richard Rawlinson, in the mid 1750s, reviewed the documents of nonjuring consecrations and compiled what is now considered the authoritative roster. In it, he famously notes:<sup>214</sup>

Ric. Welton, D.D., was consecrated by Dr. Taylor alone in a clandestine manner.

x x x Talbot, M.A., was consecrated by the same person at the same time, and as irregularly.

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<sup>213</sup> Richard Rawlinson (1690-1755) was a one of fifteen children of a quondam mayor of London, who was an interesting combination of mild Jacobite and former vintner. Growing up in financial comfort, after taking his MA from St John's College, Oxford in 1713, Rawlinson indulged his passion for topography, history, travel, and relentless book and manuscript acquisition. He was ordained deacon and priest in 1716 by the nonjuring bishop Jeremy Collier and in 1728, somewhat reluctantly, was consecrated a nonjuring bishop by three of the 'non-usager' group. He was extremely secretive about his nonjuring orders and never wanted his priestly or episcopal titles to be used. His episcopal motto, in Greek, was 'I collect and I preserve'.

From his entry in the ODNB: 'He was one of the greatest collectors of the eighteenth century and his lasting monument is the vast accumulation of 5000 manuscripts which have furnished material for all manner of historical, theological, and literary studies since they came to rest in the Bodleian in 1756'. The writer of this monograph is deeply grateful to RR, especially for the 'Rawlinson D Mss', which contain one of the largest sources of papers connected with the nonjurors.

And if Rawlinson, in spring 1742, hadn't bargained with some grocers, candle makers, and unknown others to obtain from them the papers of two deceased bishops of London, Henry Compton and John Robinson, we may have ended up with far fewer source materials for the 'Glorious Revolution' and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel'. (ODNB) The papers had been sold to—or found in a rubbish bin by—a grocer and divvied up with local shop owners, who had a need to wrap fish. Rawlinson writes: 'They belonged to one Mr [Anth.] Gibbon, lately dead, who was private secretary to both the afore-mentioned prelates'.

<sup>214</sup> Rawlinson himself couldn't have been a witness. He was travelling in Italy during the time.

The imperfect information suggests that no contemporary was able to supply anything to Rawlinson that was more accurate. Initial knowledge of the Welton and Talbot consecrations came from that most human of channels, gossip—and gossip, most probably, by Richard Welton himself.

By the time Talbot was consecrated it was likely that he had accepted the nonjurors as the remnant of the true church, even if he resisted the corollary that all acts of the Church of England, from 1691, were null and void.<sup>215</sup> Still, his choice to undergo nonjuring consecration was quixotic and politically suicidal.

After the two men were consecrated, they seem have made some arrangement that Welton would stay longer in England and Talbot would return to New Jersey. Whilst in London, Welton arranged for seals (definitely), vestments (possibly), 'guns and fishing tackle' (definitely and strangely), along with engraved copies of his infamous Whitechapel altarpiece (definitely and egotistically). And he was no doubt making whatever financial arrangements were required for his move to America; sources suggest he amassed at least 300 pounds.

Talbot boarded a ship in mid-October 1722<sup>216</sup> and arrived in America on 22 November. Barely a month later, on 26 December 1722, Ralph Taylor died.

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<sup>215</sup> He may have been moving in that direction, if he brought with him in 1722 a copy of Howell's *The Case of Schism in the Church of England Truly Stated*, as Urmstone claimed.

<sup>216</sup> On the return voyage, he sailed with the Reverend William Skinner, who had previously served as a lay schoolmaster in Philadelphia and had just been ordained by the Bishop of London. Skinner, a Scot, was born in 1687, probably of the McGregor clan. He may have had some role in the 1715 Jacobite rising. After its failure, he made his way to Holland, then the West Indies, and finally to America in 1718, having changed his name somewhere along the way from McGregor to Skinner. Returning to England for orders in 1722, he was appointed SPG missionary at Perth Amboy and Piscataway, where he served until his death in 1758.

Skinner and Talbot would have known each other in Philadelphia when Skinner was schoolmaster there, but there is no indication that they saw one another in London in 1722 or planned to sail together on their return voyage. Presumably their Stuart sympathies would have made them congenial shipmates and it's tempting to wonder if Talbot confided his episcopal status to Skinner on the voyage home. That they were close is clear from the fact Skinner was one of the two men Talbot's widow asked to write a memorial inscription for him.

### *Who knew what, when?*

Talbot resumed his work in America where he left off, writing to the SPG<sup>217</sup> on 20 September 1723:<sup>218</sup> ‘I have more work to do now than I had before and I have no Assistant they have both gone & have left me and the Church in the Lurch. I have 15<sup>219</sup> Miles to Travell from the Capes of Delaware to the Hills & Mountains in East Jersey and none to help me’.

And there was Christ Church, Philadelphia, which Talbot had looked after as he could. It was now vacant. Vicary, their last rector, fell ill in spring 1721/22, and his place was supplied by visiting clergy, for a time by William Harrison, who was self-described as ‘fatt’ and ill-suited to the hard life of missionary,<sup>220</sup> only arriving in America in his forties. But Harrison, very possibly with the assistance of forged credentials, managed to get himself appointed to St Andrew’s, Staten Island, so that left the parish without a minister sooner than

<sup>217</sup> Historians have noted that in Talbot’s letters to the SPG, following his return from England, there is no more pleading for a bishop, something that occurred with relentless regularity in his earlier correspondence.

<sup>218</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 17, p. 237: Mr Talbot to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 29 June 2010.

<sup>219</sup> This seems like a far too short number of miles for the travel, which would be more reasonably described as 75, but as Talbot’s original letter didn’t survive and only the SPG copy-book remains, ‘15 miles’ must be accepted.

<sup>220</sup> Before settling in Philadelphia, Harrison supplied the parishes of Hopewell and Maidenhead in New Jersey. He wrote to the SPG from Hopewell on 3 November 1722: ‘The gentlemen who are sent here as Missionarys are generally obliged to preach at 3 places 20 or 30 miles distance[.] Riding was never agreeable to me nor can I with any tolerable satisfaction endure this Country life[.] Heats & colds are sudin and extreme & their life is very different from what I have been used to . . . The Revd Mr Talbot being a single man of a generous temper & not thinking of a successor had almost made them expect to be rewarded for riding 20 miles to church, rather than they give to a Minister’. *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 16, p. 217: Mr Harrison to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 29 June 2010. Harrison’s removal to St Andrew’s, Staten Island, under dubiously appropriate circumstances, began a long and contentious battle amongst the parish, Governor Burnet, and the SPG.

they had expected.

The parish then turned in 1723 to John Urmstone, the troubled and troublesome missionary whom Talbot had written in 1717 when he was in North Carolina, urging him to come north. Urmstone was an altogether nasty piece of work. His tongue and temper were fierce, and he was an alcoholic by this time. The corpus of his letters to the SPG is, with few exceptions, a monotonous tirade of complaint and perceived injustice.<sup>221</sup> After Harrison's departure, Urmstone was asked to oversee the parish for a time, but his disagreeableness and his obvious drinking made him quickly disliked. The parish wanted him out, but he was resistant to complaints and cajolery, preferring a disagreeable Philadelphia to what he had left in North Carolina. The parish tried buying him out, but even that failed.

In October 1723, Talbot and his fellow clergy met together in some sort of convocation of their own and determined to force Urmstone to leave. In a letter of 24 October to the SPG<sup>222</sup> signed by all the Pennsylvania clergy (and Talbot), they explained their reasons for joining together to rid the parish of the loathsome Urmstone and pleaded for additional clergy for the churches,

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<sup>221</sup> In one typical letter to the SPG on 31 December 1719 from North Carolina, he complains about the wretched conditions of his household: 'if I had Slaves and Barns with the necessaries that must be had, I could improve my plantation, raise stock and Subsist myself and my family very comfortably . . . I have only a Sorry wretch that I came by on the Ships acct. and hath but a yeare and a half to serve, she knows nothing of household affairs, a notorious whore and thief and yet preforable to any that can be hired here notwithstanding all her faults, she was bred a Teodor [Theodore] in Spittlefields but followed the Musick Houses most and other vile courses which her brought her to Bridewell & from thence transported hither, except I can get a sober good woman into the house I cannot hold it any longer, I intend to send my two youngest Children as a present to the Society hoping they will put them into some Charity School or hospital'. (*American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 14, p. 67: John Urmstone to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 29 June 2010.)

The SPG may not have known that Urmstone was a drunkard, but they had endured these sorts of letters (often running to four and five pages) for years. Urmstone falls into that category of persons described as mad, bad, and dangerous to know. He died in March 1731/32 in Maryland, burning to death after falling into a fire when drunk.

<sup>222</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 17, p. 191: The Clergy of Pensilvania to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 29 June 2010.

meanwhile pledging themselves to supply Christ Church as they could.<sup>223</sup> Urmstone retired sulking and furious to Maryland, scrounging for a cure there. Talbot returned to Burlington, but in December he was back in Philadelphia, owing to an attack of 'cholera morbus'<sup>224</sup> and the need to see a doctor.

Urmstone had fastened on Talbot as the ringleader of the clergy who had engineered his removal. His bitterness at being manoeuvred out of Christ Church was increased by the knowledge that Talbot was the recipient of the Tenison interest.

Ironically Talbot and Urmstone had both been in London in 1722, Urmstone having returned to England after his deplorable career in North Carolina, apparently hoping to find some cure in England. Unsuccessful, he 'attended at the door' at the SPG's June 1722 meeting, where his brief petition to return to North Carolina was 'read and rejected', as the society had already arranged for a missionary there. Casting about for what to do next, Urmstone visited Thomas Bray at least once during this period, seeking his connections and patronage for some sort of position.

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<sup>223</sup> The high-church tendencies of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey clergy were beginning to rile the Governor of New York and New Jersey, William Burnet (1668–1729). Assuming office in New York on 16 September 1720 — when Talbot was in England — Burnet was the son of the bishop of Salisbury, Gilbert Burnet, a leader of the Whigs in the House of Lords and author of the five-volume classic *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* as well as *History of My Own Time*.

Governor Burnet, personable and portly, was tolerant to a degree with his high-church clergy, but like Hunter before him, closely guarded the rights and privileges of his office. On 18 December 1723 he ended a letter to the secretary of the SPG: 'As the King has given me the Right of Collating to Benefices in express Words I expected that my instances to the Society would have prevailed, and since if I were as Strict as I might be on some of their Missionarys, they would not live so easy as they do, if the Government were acquainted with their open disaffection and as Mr Nelson, a professed Jacobite, had formerly great influence in recommending them, it may deserve an enquiry what principles they have propagated since they have been in the Country'. *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 17, p. 250: Governor Burnet to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 29 June 2010.

Burnet was appointed governor general of Massachusetts in 1727 and died in 1729 either from a stroke or from a stagecoach accident, depending on which account one reads.

<sup>224</sup> Now identified as a form of gastroenteritis. *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 17, p. 250: Mr Talbot to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 29 June 2010.

With no prospects in England, Urmstone returned to America in 1722/23, landing in Boston and attempting to attach himself to the 'New Episcopal Church' there. Failing that, he journeyed to New York, angling for the chaplain's position at the fort, which in his own words he 'narrowly missed'. Then he fetched up in Philadelphia, having got wind that Vicary, the rector of Christ Church, was ill and unlikely to resume his duties. No doubt Urmstone seemed like a reasonable choice to the parish at the time, someone who could serve more regularly than the sequence of clergy who could only provide occasional services. But the geographical nearness of Talbot and Urmstone was explosive. On 30 June 1724 Urmstone tossed a match into the powder keg. Taking advantage of his relationship with Thomas Bray — no matter how thin it may have been — Urmstone wrote about his present situation and launched into a vicious attack on Talbot.<sup>225</sup>

Cecil County in Maryland, June ult. 1724.

Rev. Sir:

You may remember that I once had a mind to have gone with the D[uke] of Portland; you were pleased to offer me that letter to a French Marquis who went with his Grace. I thought my Lord D[uke] of Kingston who married the other's sister might be more effectual. He spake to his brother and his answer was that he should take no more into his family and yet soon after entertained Charles Lamb. This was one of the many disappointments I met with whilst in England last.

I was rude in not acquainting you with my departure, but believe you will be so good as to pardon that and many other liberties particularly this long scroll which with humble respects will give you a further account of my unfortunate circumstances which I the rather communicate to you knowing you to be no half papist, as too many of the clergy now-a-days are.

You're to be acquainted that I went from London to New England,

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<sup>225</sup> Because this letter is so critical to the unfolding of Talbot's demise, it's reproduced in full. Although partially transcribed in *Historical Documents of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (1851) and Hill's 1876 *History of the Church at Burlington*, neither indicates the source for the original letter.

where I had some hopes of staying but was prevented by the New Converts, one whereof had the offer if he would go to England and be ordained, and forthwith did, and is now minister of the New Episcopal Church in Boston, the only man that could be thought of; he'll do more good there than any other. I left the place very contentedly, and went from New York, where I narrowly missed of being Chaplain to the Fort and assistant to Mr. Vesey.

Hearing that the Incumbent of Philadelphia was gone to England for his health, and left the place ill-supplied, I hastened thither, and was gladly received of the people. About six months after, we had the news of the death of the Incumbent aforesaid. I had written to my correspondent to get some friend to intercede with my then Lord of London<sup>226</sup> to appoint me minister there. I never doubted of my friend's diligence nor his Lordship's favour, but my letters from England must certainly have been intercepted.

Mr. Talbot, the famous Rector of Burlington, in the Jerseys, supplanted me here. Governor Burnet had been long displeased with him by reason he is a notorious Jacobite, and will not pray for the King and Royal Family by name, only says the King and Prince, by which 'tis obvious whom he means. He hath often endeavoured to persuade me to do so too (little less than treason, I think, to go about to pervert the King's subjects from their duty and allegiance to his Majesty). He hath poisoned all the neighbouring clergy with his rebellious principles; they dare not pray otherwise than he does when he is present. He caused many of my hearers to leave the Church; at last he gained his point, was accepted, and I kicked out very dirtily by the Vestry, who pretend that the Bishop of London is no Diocesan, nor hath anything to do there more than another Bishop, so that any one that is lawfully ordained and licenced by any Bishop, it matters not who, the Bishop of Rome I suppose Talbot and many more will say, or any other, is capable of taking upon him any cure in America.

I was not sorry for my removal from so precarious and slavish a

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<sup>226</sup> John Robinson at this time.



place, where they require two sermons every Lord's Day, Prayers all the week, and Homilies on Festivals, besides abundance of Funerals, Christenings at home, and sick to be visited; no settled salary, the Churchwardens go from house to house every six months, every one gives what he pleases, sometimes liberally, and on the least pretence or dislike, or it may be the persuasion of the Churchwardens and their adherents, they'll give nothing, and so they forced that worthy gentleman, Dr. Evans, and many others to leave the places; they love new faces. I was told that they had eleven ministers within the space of nine years.

About three months after Talbot was gotten into his kingdom some had the courage to go to Sir William Keith, who otherwise was well enough pleased with Talbot, and to tell his Excellency that it was a shame such a fellow should be allowed to officiate in the Church, and that if his Excellency suffered him they would write to England against them both, whereupon Talbot was sent away, and the place hath been vacant these four months.

What has become of this great Apostle I know not; certainly Governor Burnet will not suffer him to return to Burlington. Some of his confidants have discovered that he is in orders, as many more rebels are. I have heard of no ordinations he has made as yet, but doubtless he'll persuade all the clergy who are his creatures to be ordained again by him. To this end he came fraught from England with some of the most virulent and scandalous pamphlets he could pick up; that one I met with by chance, whose title was, 'The Case Truly Stated,'<sup>227</sup> proving that all ordained by Bishops consecrated since or such as conformed and approved of the revolution are impostors, and the divine service is only to be performed by those who have been re-ordained by nonjurors, and that there are enough of them all over England to serve the Church. *Pro mores atque hominum fidem!*

As oldest Missionary he received the three years' interest of the

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<sup>227</sup> This was the work of Laurence Howell referred to earlier (*The Case of Schism in the Church of England Truly Stated* [1717]), considered seditious and which, as noted, landed the author in Newgate, where he died.

£1000 the late Archbishop of Canterbury his legacy towards the support of a Bishop in the plantations, and is entitled to the same until a Bishop be appointed. My Lord Chancellor did not know the man, or certainly he would never have admitted him to so great a favour.

I went by land from Philadelphia to North Carolina, in order to take a view of Maryland and Virginia, and to sell my Plantation, stock, and goods; that done, I returned to Maryland, and am settled in Cecil County, a very promising, thriving place; the income is between 33 and 34,000, which will be considerable when Tobacco bears a price.

I am, Reverend Sir,  
Your most obedient  
John Urmston

That Talbot's most voluble informer would be such a blackguard as Urmstone is a pity, but the fact that Urmstone was a scoundrel didn't make him a liar.

On its face, it's odd that Urmstone chose to accuse Talbot of sedition, if not treason, in a letter to Bray rather than directly in a letter to the SPG or to the newly appointed bishop of London, Edmund Gibson, who has assumed office in April 1723. Possibly he thought that if Bray chose to forward the information, it would have greater credibility with the recipients (as it did). Assuming Urmstone's letter arrived within six weeks after its date at the soonest, Bray would have received it in early August 1724. But there is no evidence that he did anything immediately with it.

The letter was surely a bombshell. If Talbot had been clearly tory in his politics and nonjuring in his inclinations, his conduct was ambiguous enough to have allowed him to minister undisturbed for the past several years. (And his devotion to duty and his relentless energy were doubtless appreciated by the SPG.) Urmstone, by alluding to Talbot's consecration, his possession of seditious materials, his arm-twisting of fellow clergy to avoid praying for the royal family, and the suggestion that he might start performing episcopal acts, cast Talbot's alleged behaviour in a far more serious light.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>228</sup> Some of Urmstone's assertions were wrong. By July 1724 Talbot was indeed back in Burlington, since Christ Church was being supplied by Welton. There is no evidence that William

The arrival of Richard Welton in Philadelphia, likely in December 1723,<sup>229</sup> added another combustible element to the mix. Christ Church, ever in need of ministers to supply their vacant pulpit, arranged for Welton to take services periodically through the winter and spring of 1723/24. His known nonjuring rigour and tendency to the dramatic may have increased in the parish the more overt signs of disaffection to the House of Hanover. On 27 July 1724, the parish extended an invitation to him to become rector (later claiming that they thought he had taken the oaths).

That same month, Sir William Keith, the governor of Pennsylvania, wrote to Bishop Gibson:<sup>230</sup>

It seems to me necessary further to acquaint your Lordship that the management of Christ Church in Philadelphia is in the hands of a Vestry and two Church-wardens yearly elected and chosen by the people and being they have all along claimed an independency of the Governor's authority, I am for peace sake obliged to be passive in things which are both indecent and disorderly such as suffering of some Clergymen to read prayers and preach without mentioning the King, Prince and Royal family according to the rubrick so that myself and family with such others as are of unquestioned Loyalty to his present Majesty are deprived the benefit of going to Church least it might give encouragement to a spirit of disaffection. Should your Lordship therefore be pleased to cause some enquiry to be made in this matter it would probably put an effectual stop to what in time may become more pernicious for it is confidently reported here that some of these nonjuring Clergymen pretend to the authority and office of Bishops in the Church which however they do not own and I believe will not dare to practice for I have publicly

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Keith had yet taken any steps to forbid him the exercise of ministry in Pennsylvania, although he was clearly unhappy by this time with the growing public signs of the clergy's nonjuring sympathies.

<sup>229</sup> There is no evidence to confirm that Talbot and Welton had planned for Welton to come directly from London to Philadelphia. But if Welton had arranged for episcopal seals and vestments for both of them, it would be sensible for him to have done so.

<sup>230</sup> *Fulham Papers*, Pennsylvania, letter 114-15 (former reference: FP VII): William Keith to Edmund Gibson, 20 July 1724. Transcribed in Williams Stevens Perry, *Papers relating to the History of the Church in Pennsylvania A.D. 1680-1778*, Privately printed, 1871, 137-138

declared my resolution to prosecute with effect all those who either in doctrine or conversation shall attempt to debauch any of the people with schismatical disloyal principles of that nature.

This letter may have been the first direct indication to Bishop Gibson that something was quite amiss in his overseas jurisdiction. And it was only the beginning of a fusillade of correspondence. The Reverend Jacob Henderson, now settled as a missionary on the 'western shore' of Maryland, reported the nonjuring bishop rumours to Gibson in a letter of 16 August 1724<sup>231</sup> and the Reverend Christopher Wilkinson, commissary of Maryland, indicated to Gibson in a letter of 9 September 1724 that he has heard of Talbot's and Welton's nonjuring episcopal status.<sup>232</sup>

Urmstone wrote to Bray about Talbot again on 29 July 1724.<sup>233</sup>

In a former I have acquainted you with my treatment at Philadelphia, how villainously and barbarously I was supplanted by Mr. Talbot, who has been years at Burlington in the Jerseys, some time Itinerant with George Keith, and very famous for his disaffection to the Crown. Ever since the revolution he and one Smith<sup>234</sup> a rigid

<sup>231</sup> *Fulham Papers*, Volume III 1720–undated–1771, letter 41–42. Henderson was the missionary who in 1711 was supplying for Talbot in Burlington and omitting at his request prayers against the enemies of the crown.

<sup>232</sup> Norman Sykes, *Edmund Gibson, bishop of London, 1669–1748: a study in politics and religion in the eighteenth century*, Cambridge 1926, 349.

<sup>233</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, the C series letter books, 1635–1812*, Item 67b, image 172: John Urmstone to Dr Bray. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 22 July 2011. The letter—which had travelled from Urmstone to Bray to Gibson to the SPG—was wrinkled, frayed at the edges, and torn, which removed the signature. But it is in the handwriting of Urmstone and one can see clearly that it had been signed. Even if it the letter was damaged when conveyed from Bray to Gibson, surely Bray must have included a covering letter to indicate who it was from. The 'anonymous' attribution of this letter comes from the SPG A-series letter book, where the copyist, transcribing the original letter, wasn't able to determine the writer. Earlier historians, relying on the letter book, began the 'anonymous' attribution not having access to the original letter.

But some mystery remains, as in the SPG minutes for the December 1724 meeting it is described as 'from an unknown writer'. Perhaps Gibson simply didn't bother to include information about the writer, which presumably Dr Bray had included when he forwarded it to Gibson.

<sup>234</sup> Unidentified

Jacobite took some pains to persuade me not to pray for the King and Royal Family, but to say as they did, only the King and Prince ('tis obvious whom they mean) and since I was not to be wrought on, I was by their contrivance very unhandsomely kickt out, and in order to proselyte that province he, the said Talbot, supplied the place till some honest hearts addressed the Governour, and he ordered the Church doors to be shut up, but now set open again to your late neighbour Dr. Welton, who I hear is lately arrived there. If more such come of that kidney all the clergy both in and out of the Government will be corrupted, and the people all seduced from their allegiance to his Majesty — there will be no need of popish priests and Jesuits any longer — they who should oppose and resist will effectually carry on and promote the Romish designs.

I can't but wonder how my Lord Chancellor was induced to let Talbot when last in England have the interest of the late Archbishop Cant. his legacy towards sending a Bishop over into America, with assurance of having it for the future till one be appointed. I am now settled here in an easy parish well disposed people. I have a fine glebe and between 30 and 40,000 lbs. worth of tobacco yearly; but I fear I shall receive none this year, that and corn all being burnt up with the excessive drought. I am with all humble respects, [John Urmstone]

Apparently in the habit of writing at the end of each month to Bray, Urmstone scrawled again on '7ber 29<sup>th</sup> 1724:<sup>235</sup>

P. S. Mr. Talbot did me no diskindness in causing me to be turned out of Philadelphia to make room for himself. He convened all the Clergy to meet, put on his robes & demanded Episcopal obedience from them; one wiser than the rest refused, acquainted the Govr with the ill consequences thereof, the danger he would run of losing his Govmt, whereupon the Govr ordered the Church to be shut up.

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<sup>235</sup> Hills, *History*, 190-1. (7ber is September, when the new year is reckoned from 25 March.) Only these two postscripts survive from that letter, and these are quoted in a letter from Archdeacon Phillips Stubbs to Bishop Gibson, 16 April 1725. It appears that Dr Bray by this time was simply forwarding Urmston letters directly to the SPG or to Bishop Gibson.

P. S. He is succeeded by Dr. Welton who makes a great noise amongst them by reason of his sufferings. He has brought with him to the value of £300 St: in guns & fishing tackle, with divers printed copies of his famous altar-piece at White chapel; he has added a scrowl<sup>236</sup> with words proceeding out of the mouth of the Bp. of Peterborough to this effect, as I am told, 'I am not he that betrayed Christ, though as ready to do it as ever Judas was.' I have met him since in the streets, but had no further conversation with him.

The vexing issue of the length of transit for letters makes it difficult to reconstruct an accurate timeline for the revelations of Talbot's 'disaffection' and rumours of his consecration. It similarly affects the ability to develop a tidy chronological sequence of responses by the official bodies. Earlier historians hold Urmstone's letter (either of June or July 1724) to Bray as the first revelation of Talbot's nonjuror status, but it likely wasn't. William Keith's letter to Bishop Gibson was probably the first indication of serious trouble, as it appears that some group of unknown persons in April or May 1724 had visited the governor and threatened the possible collapse of his administration if he didn't report to London the activities of Talbot (and presumably Welton).

Meanwhile, in Burlington again, Talbot was continuing with his ministry as if nothing had changed. In July he conveyed some several acres of land he had purchased in Burlington earlier as a glebe for St Mary's parish, using the long-delayed Frampton legacy of one hundred pounds—which Catherine Bovey had arranged—to secure the property. The deed is dated 13 July 1724.<sup>237</sup>

It's doubtful that the gift of a glebe would have calmed the annoyance of Governor Burnet. In August he was writing irritably to Bishop Gibson that Talbot avoided him, wouldn't take the oaths, enjoyed the Tenison legacy, and 'has had

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<sup>236</sup> scroll

<sup>237</sup> Hills, *History*, 180. The deed, in the parish archives of St Mary's, Burlington in the 1880s, appears to have been lost. It's impossible to determine whether Talbot initiated this transaction knowing that his position as rector and SPG missionary was threatened. (Presumably even as a dismissed missionary, he could still engage in real property transactions.) He may have arranged the transaction at this time as a counterbalance to the nonjuring rumours, to indicate to the SPG and Bishop Gibson that he was still a loyal and devoted servant of the

the folly to confess to some who have published it, that he is a Bishop'.<sup>238</sup> A reconstructed timeline suggests that Talbot once again escaped from oath-taking—or refused them—in July or August 1724.

On 7 September 1724,<sup>239</sup> Talbot was diligently responding to queries sent to all the clergy in America about the state of their parishes. At the end of his letter, he requested from the SPG money for a bell 'to gather the people together for worship'. There is no sense in his tone that his long ministry in Burlington would soon be at an end.

By mid-autumn 1724, all those letters would be received in London.

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<sup>238</sup> *Fulham Papers* XLI, ff. 97-100

<sup>239</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 18, p. 184: Mr Talbot to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 5 March 2010.

### *The noose tightens*

**T**he nonjuring bishops in England apparently didn't learn of the act of the renegade Ralph Taylor for some time. He doesn't appear to have divulged his presumptuous undertaking to any of his fellow bishops before he died in December 1722. But Welton was in and about London throughout 1722 and most of 1723, and he appears to have confided in at least some nonjurors. On 5 October 1724, Alexander Campbell (Bishop of Aberdeen but a close associate of the English nonjurors) wrote to the nonjuring bishop Thomas Brett:<sup>240</sup>

I have just time to tell you that Dr. Taylor uncanonically and singly consecrated two Bishops for America without the consent of his brethren, one Mr. Talbot of that country, and it seems Dr. Welton also—at least Dr. Welton says he did—and has carried with him an Episcopal habit and a mitred seal, has borrowed as much money as he could get, &c. These be dark days.

And the SPG, meeting in October 1724, having had enough of Talbot's evasion of the oaths and his apparent refusal to pray for the king and royal family and noting it had received information from 'a Person of very good credits', suspended his salary until he could clear himself of the charges.<sup>241</sup> The 'Person' was unlikely to have been Urmstone, whom the society by this time could scarcely call 'of very good credits'. The source is rather likely to have been either Governor Keith or Governor Burnet, both of whom had complained of Talbot. (And the SPG had had a history of complaints from earlier governors about Talbot's evasion or refusal of the oaths.) Or they could have possibly been referring to Thomas Bray, but as he had merely forwarded the Urmstone letter, this seems unlikely.

At its November meeting, the SPG realized the contradiction of suspending

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<sup>240</sup> Skipton, 'John Talbot', p. 227

<sup>241</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Journal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Vol. V, October 1724, pp. 9-10. Digital images of original pages: <http://britishonlinearchives.org.uk>. The letter suspending his SPG stipend probably wasn't received by Talbot till early spring 1724/25.



Talbot's salary but allowing him to continue to receive the Tenison interest. They moved at that meeting to proceed with the necessary steps to rescind the order for continuing payments.<sup>242</sup>

Edmund Gibson, who was appointed bishop of London in 1723 at the death of John Robinson, had not yet acted in any formal way, either as Talbot's diocesan or a member of the SPG. But he would move very soon and very forcefully. He was not a person to suffer continuing assaults on the authority of the government. Earlier in his life, when just taking his BA from Oxford, he had briefly considered becoming a nonjuror, but by June 1691 he had taken the oaths, having been convinced, as he wrote later, of the legitimacy of the reign of William and Mary.<sup>243</sup> He may have been particularly sensitive to the matter of a nonjuring priest in the colonies.

For the December 1724 meeting of the society, which he was unable to attend, Gibson forwarded three letters—Urmstone's 29 July letter to Bray, along with (most likely) those of Keith and Burnet—and added that 'one of these will make the Society see how necessary it is to take further proceedings re Mr Talbot'.<sup>244</sup> The society's journal noted:

Order'd that letters be wrote to the Governors or New York and

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<sup>242</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Journal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Vol. v, November 1724, p. 12. Digital images of original pages: <http://britishonlinearchives.org.uk>.

<sup>243</sup> Edmund Gibson (1668-1748) was a rigorous and serious scholar who 'by the time of his graduation had produced his first publication, an edition of William Drummond's *Polemio-Middinia* and James V's *Cantilena rustica*, which revealed a knowledge of Old English, Gothic, and Norse as well as of classical authors' (from his entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*). Deciding in favour of the church instead of a career in law or academia, he became Thomas Tenison's domestic chaplain in 1698. Before being appointed bishop of Lincoln in 1715, he had worried that he was being passed over for further advancement in the church and, according to his detractors, was something of a lackey to the king and court, courting royal favour as he could. 'Gibson was widely perceived as a partisan low-churchman—Hearne claimed that "he makes it his Business to cringe, flatter, write for the Whiggs" (*Remarks*, 2.46)', from the article on Gibson in the ODNB. (Hearne wasn't an unbiased observer, as a vehement nonjuror.) Gibson's greatest achievement was his massive *Codex juris ecclesiastici Anglicani*, a standard reference of English canon law well into the nineteenth century.

<sup>244</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Journal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Vol. v, December 1724, p. 19. Digital images of original pages: <http://britishonlinearchives.org.uk>.

Pensylvania acquainting them with the Accounts the Society have recd of the behaviour of Mr Talbot and Dr Welton, and particularly acquainting Governor Burnet, that the Society have, upon the first information they recd of Mr Talbots disaffection to the Government suspended the payment of his Salary from this Board and stopt the further payment of the Interest of the late Arch Bishop Tenisons Thousand pound bequeathed for settling Bishops in America.

Letters from America about Talbot and Welton continued to assail Bishop Gibson in late 1724 and early 1725. From James Honeyman,<sup>245</sup> an SPG missionary in Rhode Island, and Jacob Browne, a layman in Connecticut,<sup>246</sup> he received further reports of Talbot and Welton being in nonjuring episcopal orders.

Talbot's association with Welton no doubt exacerbated Gibson's concern about their activities. Welton's profligate and excessive behaviour in London since 1714 was well-known, and his appearance in America must have been very worrisome. There is no evidence that Talbot and Welton knew each other before being consecrated at the same time in 1722; they weren't likely to have been close, given what we know of their personalities. And by late 1724 or early 1725, Talbot seems to have distanced himself from Welton. But the damage by association had already been done.

In early summer 1725 Gibson opened another avenue of attack on Talbot and Welton. He took up the matter with the Lords Justices, seeking a far harsher response to their reported behaviour:

[Gibson] laid the matter before the Duke of Newcastle, quoting extracts from the letters which he had received from Governor Burnet, Sir William Keith, and others, and pointing out that this was a 'step well judged and wisely taken by the enemies of their government,' because, by their administration of the Episcopal offices, the Bishops would 'not fail to gain great respect so long as there were none else who could administer them', and so they

<sup>245</sup> *Fulham Papers*, Pennsylvania, letter 192 (former reference: FP VIII): James Honeyman to Edmund Gibson, 26 January 1724/25

<sup>246</sup> *Fulham Papers*, Connecticut, letter 210-11: Jacob Browne to Edmund Gibson, 15 March 1724/25

would have opportunities 'to corrupt the people in their loyalty to the King'.<sup>247</sup>

Just a few days after he had first presented the issue, he was back urging Newcastle 'that some resolution be speedily taken', so once again the law officers were called into consultation'.<sup>248</sup> By casting Talbot and Welton in the light of political conspirators, he hoped to spur the government into action.

By late spring 1725, other SPG missionaries knew that Talbot had been suspended. The Reverend John Bartow wrote to the society that perhaps he could petition for the Tenison interest, now that Talbot was no longer receiving it.<sup>249</sup> And in London, the concern over Taylor's ill-advised consecrations continued amongst the nonjurors, with Dr John Walker writing to Thomas Brett:<sup>250</sup>

I was always of opinion that there should be one or more Bishops personally resident in the West Indies, but am sorry to hear from you that there are two gone over with such an irregular consecration, and one of them such an ill life. I congratulate with those gentlemen that refused to join in the consecration.

By late June, Talbot had received unofficial news of his dismissal from the SPG. He wrote a blistering letter to Bishop Gibson:<sup>251</sup>

Burlington, July 2d, 1725.

May It Please Your Lordship:

I understand by letters from some friends in England that I am discharged the Society for Exercising Acts of Jurisdiction over my

<sup>247</sup> Sykes, *Edmund Gibson*, 349. He references as his source 'Gibson to the Duke of Newcastle, 4 June 1725, State Papers Dom. Geo. I, B. 56'. (The Duke of Newcastle was Secretary of State from 1724.)

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*, 349.

<sup>249</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Journal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Vol. v, November 1725, p. 65, Digital images of original pages: <http://britishonlinearchives.org.uk>.

<sup>250</sup> Skipton, 'John Talbot', 227.

<sup>251</sup> *Fulham Papers*, Volume VI 1686-1771, letter 130-1. Transcribed in full in Hills, *History*.

Brethren, the Missionaries, &c. This is very strange to me, for I knew nothing about it, nor any body else, in all the world. I could disprove it by 1,000 witnesses, but since there is one come home in the *Richmond*, Mrs. Alexander,<sup>252</sup> relict of the Comptroller in Philadelphia, &c. (she has been many years a member of Christ Church,) she can give your Lordship the best account of the present state.

As for myself, I shall not turn accuser of the Brethren, but this I will say, those that came last are not better than their fathers, and some of them have given occasion to a proverb of reproach, and been told to their faces, 'The Devil would have the Bishop of London for ordaining such fellows as you.'

This I take to be the most unpardonable sin, the iniquity of Eli's house, which the Lord said should not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not: But, my Lord, let them be who they will, or what they will, to their own master they stand or fall, I have nothing to do with them, nor ever had, nor ever will.

I am clear of the blood of all men, and will so keep myself. Let them that have the watch look out: as your Lordship has done me the wrong, so I hope you will do me the right, upon better information, to let me be in *statu quo*, — for indeed I have suffered great wrong, for no offence or fault at all, that I know of, a long, long penance I have done, for crimes, alas! to me unknown, but God has been with me, and made all things work together for my good; meanwhile I hope your Lordship will hear the right, and do nothing rashly, but upon your authority, for the edification and not for the destruction of this poor Church *apud Americanos*, which has many adversaries, and none to help her.

But this good Lady, Mrs. Alexander, if your Lordship please to give her audience, will give the best information, and answer all objections that can be alleged against

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<sup>252</sup> Untraced, beyond identifying her as the wife of William Alexander, comptroller of Pennsylvania in the 1720s.

Your most humble  
And faithful servant  
J. Talbot

Note in the letter he refutes the act of exercising jurisdiction over his fellow clergy, but does not deny that he is in episcopal orders.

A few days later on 8 July 1725 he wrote to the SPG that he learnt he was 'out of Quantum with the Society' and that they had refused a bill for thirty pounds that he had earlier sent. The tone of the letter is one of sorrowful anger.

At its July meeting (well before Talbot's letter was received, of course), the society enquired into what progress had been made at the Lord Chancellor's office for ceasing the payment of the Tenison interest to Talbot. By September, all the necessary steps were taken to stop all payments to him.

Across the way at Fulham Palace, Bishop Gibson had at last, on 10 July, received the 'Law Officers' report that

'the informations contained in the said extracts were very loose and general, and did not contain any evidence of particular facts against the persons mentioned which might be the foundation of a prosecution'; but if the charge against them of claiming the exercise of Episcopal powers could be proved, it might be 'an offence punishable in the province where it was committed, as a high contempt, and a misdemeanour' again His Majesty's Ecclesiastical Supremacy. Most of the offences noticed would be punishable by ecclesiastical censures, 'if there were any proper ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the province where they were done'.<sup>253</sup>

To a canonist such as Gibson the phrase 'if there were any proper ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the province' must have rankled. It's probable that this ambiguity goaded him into a diligent search for the foundation of the bishop of London's jurisdiction in America, which occupied him for the next few years.

In the mean time, absent proper ecclesiastical jurisdiction, 'the Government

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<sup>253</sup> Sykes, *Edmund Gibson*, 350. He cites his source as 'Report of Sir Philip Yorke, S.P. Dom., B. 57'. Yorke, first earl of Hardwicke, was a protégé and the chief confidant of the Duke of Newcastle. He was attorney general from 31 January 1724.

decided that the simplest course of action would be to serve the intruding Bishops with writs commanding them to return to England'.<sup>254</sup> On 29 July this 'warrant for his recall' went forth:

Charles Delafaye, secretary of the Lords Justices to Solicitor General:

'These are in His Majesty's name to direct and require you, that you forthwith prepare a Bill for Our Signature to pass His Majesty's Privy Seal, in the Words, to the Effect following' Signed by the Duke of Dorset, the Duke of Roxburghe, and the Duke of Newcastle and the Prime Minister, Robert Walpole.<sup>255</sup>

But there was something missing before the warrant could be issued. Gibson wrote to the secretary of the SPG:<sup>256</sup>

I desire you to turn to the Books of the Society & see what Mr Talbot's Xtian name is who enjoyed the late Abp's pension & then to direct a Lre by the penny post to Charles Delafay Esq at the Duke of New Castle's office at the Cockpit Whitehall signifying what the Xtian name is.

On 13 August 1725, all was in order. In the name of George I, 'Evelyn, Duke of Kingston and Keeper of the Privy Seal' directed a 'Signet Warrant for letters of revocation' to be sent to 'John Talbot, Clerk' for his return to England.<sup>257</sup> On the same day an identical warrant was directed to Dr Richard Welton.<sup>258</sup>

To John Talbot Clerk Greeting.

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<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*, 350.

<sup>255</sup> British Library, Add. 36125 f. 372. This warrant to Talbot was only discovered in January 2009, its existence having been unknown until that time.

<sup>256</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 19, p. 2: The Bishop of London to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 5 March 2010.

<sup>257</sup> British Library, C13774 Egerton Charter 8243

<sup>258</sup> In the minutes of SPG meetings during this period, there is no indication that the society were aware of the warrant. As Gibson was a member, it appears that he chose not to inform the SPG of his action.

These are to Will and require You upon the Faith and Allegiance which You owe to Us that within the Space of one Month after the Receipt of these Our Letters of Privy Seal You set aside all Excuses and do return into Our Kingdom of Great Britain and hereof fail You not upon the Pain and Peril which shall come of your Contempt and Neglect of this Our Command.

Given &ca. And these Our Letters shall be Your sufficient Warrant and Discharge in this Behalf.

Given under his Majties Signet at his Palace of Westminster the Thirteenth Day of August In the Twelfth Year of His Majties Reign.

The news spread very quickly in England. Just a few weeks after the warrant was signed, the *British Journal* reported:

We hear an Instrument has passed the Privy Seal, requiring Dr Welton, the Nonjuror, to return to this Realm, upon his Faith and Allegiance to this Majesty, as he'll answer the same at his Peril. He is now in Pensilvania.<sup>259</sup>

And a more distant newspaper in Exeter reported just a month later:

Last week the new explanatory Charter for New England, with the two Letters of Privy Seal for calling home Dr Welch and another Nonjuring Clergyman, who Officiate there as Bishops, were sent to the Hon. William Drummer, Liutenant Governour of that Country to put the same in Execution.<sup>260</sup>

It would be several months before the warrants would arrive in America.

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<sup>259</sup> *British Journal* (London, England), Saturday, September 25, 1725, issue CLVII.

<sup>260</sup> *Brice's Weekly Journal* (Exeter, England), Friday, October 22, 1725; Issue 24. The writer got Welton's name wrong and confused New England with Pennsylvania (Drummer was an official in Massachusetts), but the substance is clear.

*The end of the mystery—and the mystery at the end*

In Burlington, the parish was fraying. Rowland Ellis, the schoolmaster, wrote the SPG in September 1725: ‘Since Mr Talbot was required to cease preaching and performing divine service in the church at Burlington at the request of the Governor, for 5 or 6 months there has been no minister for the church and a large congregation, a great pity it is they be left destitute & perish thro’ Famine of the Word & go astray like Sheep without a Shepherd’.

This suggests that some time in April or May 1725 Governor Burnet had ordered Talbot to cease his service at Burlington as a result of his refusal to take the oaths.<sup>261</sup>

On 4 November, the churchwardens and vestry wrote a formal letter of concern to Burnet for their parish and asked for his assistance in obtaining a minister. That same month, Burnet acknowledged letters from the SPG with the news of Talbot’s dismissal from their service. ‘I have writ to the Bp of London desireing him to move the Society for a new Miss<sup>ry</sup> for Burlington’.<sup>262</sup>

In Philadelphia, ironically, Welton was still officiating at Christ Church.<sup>263</sup> Talbot had removed to Philadelphia from Burlington, some time in October or November 1725, but he and Welton seemed to have nothing further to do with one another.

At its meeting in December, the society pondered the Burlington situation. The missionary at Salem, the Reverend Mr Holbrook in Salem, wanted to be considered, but the entire matter was referred to committee to ‘consider the

<sup>261</sup> In a letter from Governor Burnet to Bishop Gibson, dated 19 November 1725, he ‘Acknowledges Bishop’s June 29 letter ... Has sent order to the Justices at Burlington to tender the oaths to Mr Talbot and on his refusal to signify to him that he could not be permitted to preach there any longer’. (*Fulham Papers*, XLI fos 142-143)

<sup>262</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 19, p. 182: Bishop William Burnet to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 11 April 2010.

<sup>263</sup> *Fulham Papers*, Pennsylvania, letter 123: Letter from Thomas Glentworth to Archibald Cummings, 14 February 1725/26.



state of the Church at Burlington, and how far it may be necessary to continue to supply that Place with a Missionary'.<sup>264</sup>

Some time in late December 1725 or early January 1725/26, the warrants arrived in America. Welton was served on 12 January 1725/26<sup>265</sup> and left America in March 1725/6. He eventually ended up in Lisbon, where he seems to have had some connexions<sup>266</sup> and died there in August 1726, having refused the sacrament on his deathbed from the resident English chaplain. In his effects there was reportedly an Episcopal seal; its history since that time is unknown.

Evidence of the service of the privy seal warrant on Talbot is missing<sup>267</sup> and

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<sup>264</sup> *Journal, annual sermons and reports of the SPG, 1701-1870: Journal of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Vol. v, December 1725, p. 69, Digital images of original pages: <http://britishonlinearchives.org.uk>.

<sup>265</sup> Deposition of Robert Assheton Esq. and Patrick Baird of Philadelphia. In pursuance of directions given them by Lt. Governor Sir W. Keith, deponents delivered to Dr. Richard Welton H.M. Writ of Privy Seal, on 12 inst. etc. Signed, Rob. Assheton, Patrick Baird. Sworn before Sir W. Keith. Imprint of Seal of Pennsylvania. Recorded at the Rolls Office at Philadelphia, in *Patent Book A* Vol. 6. page 17 etc., Cha. Brookden, Maj. Rot. Dept. etc. 1 p. Torn. [CO. 5, 1233. No. 63.] Assheton was a member of Christ Church, Philadelphia and frequently on the vestry.

<sup>266</sup> He was fluent in Portuguese, based on French and English translations he made in 1720 of *The Sufferings of the Son of God*, by Thomé de Jesus Frei. Welton is generally credited with travelling to Lisbon to escape prosecution, but it was a port often sought in bad weather and ships could be laid up for months; Governor William Keith of Pennsylvania, for one, thought that Welton sailed for London via Lisbon. It's conceivable that Welton was in London for at least a short period of time in late May 1726, when he supposedly took part in the consecration of one Timothy Newmarsh on Sunday, 29 May at the nonjurors chapel at Gray's Inn. (Overton, *Non-Jurors*, 350; Broxap calls that consecration mythical.)

A London newspaper of September 1726 includes this: 'Lisbon, August 31, N.S. Dr Welton, a nonjuring English Clergyman, formerly Rector of St Mary white Chapel, whom some Time ago arrived here from Philadelphia, died lately of a Dropsy. During his Illness, he refused the assistance of the English Minister here, alledging he was not of his Communion, though as for himself he declared he was of the Church of England as reformed by Archbishop Cranmer. After his Death, among his Things was found an Episcopal Seal, which he had made use of in Pensylvania, where he affirmed and exercised privily and by Stealth the Character and Functions of a Bishop. Information of such his Practices having been transmitted from Pensylvania last year to the Lords Justices of Great Britain, they ordered a Writ of Privy Seal to be sent to him, commanding him to return Home; which Writ being served upon him in January last at Phyladelphia, he chose, rather than pay Obedience to it, to retire hither'. *Parker's Penny Post* (London), Monday, September 12, 1726; Issue 213

<sup>267</sup> The papers of William Burnet, royal governor of New Jersey and New York, in *Documents*

no records exist to indicate how he avoided complying with it. Although Talbot had been living in Philadelphia since autumn 1725, the warrant may have been delivered to Governor Burnet in New York, on the assumption that Talbot was resident in Burlington. Perhaps he eluded the warrant just as he had eluded the oaths, by not being easily found. Or it's possible that since Talbot had ceased all public ministry after April 1725 on Burnet's order, the warrant was to all intents void, and Burnet (or William Keith?) considered its service on Talbot unnecessary. Despite the antagonism between Burnet and Talbot, there seems also to have been some degree of relationship:

Talbot was a Nonjuror in the State but not in the Church, and continued in the plantations till the day of his death. He was, as Mr. Owen tells me, a quiet, inoffensive, jocose man and the Governor always winked at him, and he receiv'd a pension from the Society till the last as one of their missionaries. He was sent out in Queen Anne's time by Mr. Nelson's interest, who did it because he would not take the Oaths, but whether he acted as a Bishop after Welton's recall I know not. Burnet, the Governor of New York, knew that he was a Bishop.<sup>268</sup>

Further:

Thomas Burnet, Gilbert's [Burnet] son, was Governor of New York. He was fond of Talbot as a good companion, and screened him so that he ne'er suffered hardship, neither was he silenced.

One day when Talbot dined at Burnet's table, Burnet said to him, 'Talbot, I hear complaints against you that you do not pray for King George. Pray why don't you do it?'

'Why,' said Talbot, 'I think he is old enough to pray for himself.'

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*relating to the colonial, revolutionary and post-revolutionary history of the state of New Jersey*, Volume V, ed. W. A. Whitehead (*Archives of the State of New Jersey*, 1st ser., 1882–1949), do not include any material related to the warrant.

<sup>268</sup> Skipton, 'John Talbot', 243. This information is from Nicholas Brett, son of the nonjuring bishop Thomas Brett. 'Mr Owen' is an error; it is rather 'James Orem', who was in 1722 chaplain of the fort in New York. Nicholas Brett apparently talked to Orem in 1761, who had returned to England years before to take a parish there.

This turned the discourse into a laugh, and there it ended.<sup>269</sup>

From January 1725/26, Talbot mostly disappears from the records. After ceasing to minister at Burlington, he seems to have travelled a good bit, to Maryland and possibly to New England. Christopher Wilkinson, the Maryland commissary, wrote to Bishop Gibson in June 1726 that he 'hears that Welton has left Philadelphia for Lisbon, after disagreeing with the local nonjurors. Talbot and Smith visited Maryland recently, but behaved quietly and obeyed prohibition against their officiating sent from England'.<sup>270</sup> And in October 1726, the Reverend Thomas Standard, an SPG missionary, mentions in a letter to the society that 'in Philadelphia and on the road to it I met with but three clergymen and all of them notorious Jacobites whose names are Talbot, Smith, and the aforementioned Wayman [Weyman]'.<sup>271</sup>

At some time in the period from 1725 to 1727, Talbot, having been a bachelor all his life, surprisingly married one Anne Herbert, a widow, of Philadelphia.<sup>272</sup> She was likely about the same age as Talbot and probably a parishioner of Christ Church, but very little else is known about her. When Talbot wasn't travelling with his mysterious companion Smith or with other clergy, he and his wife seemed to have lived together in Philadelphia, with Talbot occasionally in spending time alone in Burlington. Their life must have been hard, for in November 1726, Archibald Cummings, the new rector at Christ Church, Philadelphia, wrote to Bishop Gibson.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> *ibid.* Again, a few errors: 'Thomas' Burnet is William Burnet. And certainly Talbot was silenced and did indeed suffer hardship following his discharge from the SPG and the loss of the Tenison interest. His circumstances in the last two years of his life were described by his fellow clergy as 'very mean'. But the snatch of dialogue captures something of the essence of Talbot's personality.

<sup>270</sup> *Fulham Papers*, Pennsylvania, letter 88-89: Christopher Wilkinson to Bishop Gibson, 15 June 1726. Smith, in so far as he can be identified, seems to have been a member of Christ Church, Philadelphia and a layman.

<sup>271</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812, the A series letter books, 1702-1737*, Vol. 19, p. 704: Thomas Standard to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishnonlineararchives.co.uk>, accessed 11 April 2010.

<sup>272</sup> Her previous husband, Thomas Herbert, was a wealthy plantation owner in Nevis, British West Indies. They had one child, Thomas Herbert [junior] who apparently continued to live in Nevis and oversee the plantation after his father's death.

<sup>273</sup> *Fulham Papers*, Volume VII 1680-1762, letter 128-9: Archibald Cummings to Bishop Gibson,

I have been importuned by numbers of people from Burlington and by some of this province to write to your Lordship in favour of Dr. Talbot; they made me promise to mention him, otherwise I would not presume to do it. He is universally beloved, even by the Dissenters here, and has done a great deal of good. Welton and he had differed and broke off correspondence, by reason of the rash chimerical projects of the former long before the Government took notice of them. If he were connived at and could be assisted by the Society (for I am told the old man's circumstances are very mean), he promises by his friends to be peaceable and easy, and to do all the good he can for the future.

There was no response from the bishop.

In April 1728, Nathaniel Horwood, the newly appointed missionary to Burlington, thinking that a library would be helpful to his position, called on Talbot to determine whether one existed. He reported to the SPG, 'Mr Talbot says he has none nor ever had, — only a Bible, Common prayer book, & a single book of Homilies'<sup>274</sup> — the last recorded remark of Talbot.

On 29 November 1727, John Talbot died in Burlington, age fifty-eight. His

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19 October 1726. Transcribed in Hills, *History*, 207–8.

<sup>274</sup> *American material in the archives of the USPG, 1635–1812, the A series letter books, 1702–1737*, Vol. 20, p. 182: Nathaniel Horwood to the Secretary. Digital image of original letter: <http://britishonlinearchives.co.uk>, accessed 11 April 2010. Talbot may not have possessed a library with books furnished by the SPG, but he had something of a personal library, for books were catalogued in 1719 within the parish register of St Mary's, Burlington, most as noted as belonging to 'Burlington Library' and other to John Talbot personally. It is an impressively large collection for the time, of nearly 350 volumes. Talbot suggested in an earlier letter to the SPG that the library was an amalgamation of his personal books and those of Thoroughgood Moore (who had died at sea in 1709) and Talbot intended to leave them to the parish.

There is evidence that Talbot bought books from London. Records show that he subscribed in 1720 to *Christian Morals and Christian Prudence in Two Parts Wherein Is Shewn the Peculiar Wisdom and Beauty of the Christian Religion* (1717) by John Laurence, as 'John Talbot, Rector of Burlington, New York' (possibly doing so when he was in London at that time). In 1724 he subscribed to *The Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, 'with several copper plates', by Richard Fiddes. He is described on that subscription roster as 'John Talbot, cleric in New York'. Both these records were accessed on 12 July 2009 from <http://ancestry.com>. U.K. and U.S. Directories, 1680–1830 Provo, Utah, USA: Original data: Averro Publications. Biography Database, 1680–1830. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England: Averro Publications, 1998.

death was briefly noted in the Philadelphia *American Mercury* a few days later. He was buried at St Mary's Church in Burlington, but there is no grave marker or contemporary monument within the church or the churchyard and no evidence of his death or burial in the rather erratic parish register.

After Talbot's death, Anne Herbert Talbot made arrangements for his papers to be given to the Reverend Edward Vaughan in Perth Amboy. Amongst the papers and documents was Talbot's certificate of consecration.<sup>275</sup> In addition to Talbot's papers, she gave to St Peter's Church at Perth Amboy a chalice, paten, and ewer belonging to her husband.<sup>276</sup> (The chalice remains in the possession of the parish.)

Anne Talbot died in June 1731 in Philadelphia, less than three years after John Talbot. In her nuncupative will, she instructed that she be buried beside him at the church in Burlington.<sup>277</sup> And she further requested that the Reverend Edward Vaughan—or his friend and near neighbour, the Reverend William Skinner, in Elizabeth—prepare a memorial inscription for their graves. There is no evidence that this was ever done.

The Reverend Robert Weyman, then rector of St Mary's and a friend of Talbot's, preached at her funeral. It's clear that he was acquainted with Anne Talbot, but the formal eulogy provides no personal information whatsoever. (And there is no notation of her burial in the parish register.)

The will of Anne Herbert Talbot is the most eloquent of all surviving evidence of John Talbot's consecration. Dictated when she was near death, she

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<sup>275</sup> Vaughan shared this information around 1730 with a close friend and Presbyterian clergyman Moses Dickinson, who was in Perth Amboy at the time but later in Norwalk, Connecticut. In Connecticut, Dickinson then mentioned the letter of consecration to the Revd Noah Hobart. Years later, in 1768, Hobart passed on the story to the Reverend Ezra Stiles, who noted it carefully in his journal and later included the information in his 1785 memoir. Given the inflammatory nature of the Talbot documents (especially those connected with the nonjuring consecration), it's likely that Vaughan destroyed them, perhaps not long after Dickinson first saw them. (*The literary diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D., Volume III: Jan. 1, 1782–May 6, 1795*, ed. Franklin Bowditch Dexter, New York 1901, 173.)

<sup>276</sup> The gift was formally acknowledged by the vestry on 3 September 1728.

<sup>277</sup> Ann Herbert Talbot died in June 1731 and she specified in her will that she be buried by her late husband, John Talbot, in Burlington. Her son, Thomas Herbert junior, was her sole beneficiary. He died a few months after his mother and was buried at Christ Church, Philadelphia, in September 1831.

dared to use Talbot's small episcopal seal, with its monogram and mitre, impressed in black wax near her signature.<sup>278</sup>

It may have been the first and only time the seal was ever used.

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<sup>278</sup> The will was filed at the Office of the Registrar of Wills in the city of Philadelphia and left undisturbed until the Reverend George Morgan Hills, rector of St Mary's Church, discovered it in 1876. He arranged for the seal to be photographed and later recreated as a large bas-relief for a monument installed in 1885 at the 1702 St Mary's Church in Burlington.

In 2009, the writer of this monograph, examining the will in Philadelphia, discovered that the Talbot seal had been removed and a small generic red-wax seal substituted. Whether with permission or secretly, Hills had apparently removed the seal, presumably for safe-keeping, realizing the historical importance of that small bit of wax. As part of the preparation for the monument in St Mary's Church, he had the seal photographed.

The seal made its way in some manner from Hills (who died in 1890) to the Diocese of New Jersey, for in 1907 the then Bishop of New Jersey, John Scarborough, referred to its being in Trenton. And circa 1921, when H. P. K. Skipton was in correspondence with the rector of St Mary's Church during the preparation of his article, he was assured the seal was 'carefully preserved in Trenton'. Alas, after a diligent search in the archives of the Diocese of New Jersey in 2010 and 2011, it appears that the seal has been lost.

*A bishop for America: reprise*

Since the first intimation of Talbot's consecration, historians have divided on whether it was fact or conspiratorial fantasy. By now the evidence is sufficient to lay that to rest. But the question remains: What *was* Talbot thinking? What did he hope to accomplish? It's idle to speculate beyond what the evidence will bear. It appears that Welton and Talbot had some scheme for their episcopates in America; it's likely that Welton was the driver and instigator.

What his 'chimerical' ideas may have been, one can only guess: Inciting the majority of the clergy to turn Jacobite, acknowledge the Pretender, and accept Welton and Talbot as true bishops of a true church? The absurdity of this idea is only equalled by Welton's well-known hubris. If Welton had sketched out some vague plan or other in London, Talbot might have agreed to fall in with it. He could align himself with men whose causes he believed in, even if their schemes were dubious and their motives suspect.

It's unlikely that Welton and Talbot ever planned to reveal openly their episcopal status. (Welton made the error of talking about it to a few people in England, but in and of itself that probably would have caused no further trouble.) By their very nature, nonjuring bishops operated in a secretive manner. They referred to each other as 'Mr' and there are no known registers of their acts. Welton and Talbot had reason to be equally circumspect in America. But they weren't rigorous enough.

The reference in Urmstone's letter to Talbot wearing robes and 'demanding obedience' in a convocation was no doubt a highly partisan report of something that may have been far less dramatic. Because Talbot had known many of the Pennsylvania clergy for so long, he may have felt comfortable enough in the October 1723<sup>279</sup> meeting to intimate that he had received orders in England.

Talbot could be wildly trusting when he oughtn't have been, and someone in the room seems to have found the information too alluring to keep secret. (Beyond Urmstone, Jacob Henderson and George Ross are also candidates for

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<sup>279</sup> In which they agreed to strong-arm Urmstone out of Christ Church.

purveyors of information.) But Talbot was unlikely to have ‘demanded obedience’, and his fervent denial in the 2 July 1725 letter to Bishop Gibson testifies to that. Talbot could be casuistic in his parsing of truth, but his surviving letters are evidence enough to show that he never engaged in bare-faced lies.

Whatever Welton’s grandiose plans for his episcopate, Talbot’s consecration was surely predicated on his conclusion that it would be decades before a bishop would be sent to America. Although this can only be regarded as an attractive conjecture, he may well have hoped that his orders, even if irregular, would allow him to do some small good, through private confirmations and ordinations of some who had yet to receive episcopal ordination.<sup>280</sup> It is certainly fair to conclude that Talbot’s actions as a bishop would have been consistent with his life, which wasn’t about power and prestige, but rather the single-minded purpose of furthering the church in America.

Someone once wrote, ‘Talbot was a man of wonderful nobility of soul, who would have been canonised in any other communion.’<sup>281</sup> Rather than canonised, his background was confused with his cousin’s and his lineage was muddled. His family was forgotten. His refusal to take the oath of abjuration, along with its consequences, was downplayed. His daring and quixotic consecration was often denied. Eventually the man himself was almost lost in the mists of hagiography, obscured by well-meaning scholars who had no access to records that would have allowed them a fuller view.

A man of great passion and mixed motives, Talbot was shackled by earlier historians into a sort of nineteenth-century corset until he morphs into a self-denying Victorian parson who couldn’t have possibly been a nonjuring bishop

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<sup>280</sup> A story was told by Bishop William White in his memoirs that his mother’s people—who lived in Burlington during Talbot’s time—recalled that a clergyman of some dissenting group felt doubt about his holy orders. He disappeared for a period of several days, returning far more at ease and assured about his ordained status. The assumption by White’s ancestors was that the cleric had been re-ordained by John Talbot.

On Welton’s part, a clergyman known only by his surname of ‘Dare’ turned up on London in 1734, claiming to have been ordained by Welton in America and invoking one or two other English nonjurors who could confirm his status. Neither did, and Dare was written off as a charlatan. (The story is told in Broxap’s *The Later Non-Jurors*, with reference to the original sources.) It’s certainly conceivable that Welton would have ordained someone privately in America, but no-one other than the shadowy Dare has ever surfaced.

<sup>281</sup> ‘The Church of England in the Eighteenth Century’, in *The Church Quarterly Review*, Vol. IV, April 1877–July 1877, by an anonymous writer.



(‘Rather die than tell a lie!’). The ambiguities and contradictions that historians now assume are a part of past lives were denied Talbot by generations of scholars writing during a more pious age. He was more courageous and more complex than they ever imagined.

### *John Talbot: the take away*

John Talbot was descendant of an old Norfolk family whose wealth and standing were lost with the death of Charles I. Traditionally, their university was Cambridge, their profession was law, their loyalty was to the Stuarts, and their belief was in the catholicity of the English church.

Born when Charles II was on the throne, Talbot grew to manhood in a church that could imagine no other king than a Stuart. His personality was shaped by his father's late-in-life and self-denying ministry, in conditions close to penury. His high-church sympathies were honed at St John's, Cambridge. His understanding of the role of the monarch in the life of the church was shattered by the Glorious Revolution. He deeply wished for the restoration of the Stuart dynasty. What oaths he took, he held to on his life.

His years of service as a naval chaplain taught him discipline and sharpened his ability to lead. If he could flourish in the environment of the royal navy in the late seventeenth century, serving with crews of tough, rough, recalcitrant sailors (many pressed into service against their will), there was little that John Talbot had to fear in the face of surly Quakers or angry governors.

His time as a young priest in Virginia, in a rude country far removed from the villages of Norfolk and the streets of London, developed in him a self-sufficiency and a tolerance for hardship that his bishops would have found impossible to imagine. His brief flirtation with a cure in Gloucestershire proved that a settled ministry in England was not for him. He was called to a wilder life and a tougher place.

Responding to the SPG's motto *Transiens Adiuvans Nos*, those early missionaries set out to conquer the new world with courage and belief—and a startling degree of naiveté. They boarded those graceful full-rigged ships, ready to claim America for the church, secure in their surplices and perukes and armed with the sermons of Bishop Beveridge and 'Pearson on the Creed'. Some gave up quickly, daunted by a land far harsher than they could have imagined. Some persisted for a time, until the hard parochial toil and scant pay finally drove them back across the sea. The rare few found America to be—if not England, something more rather than less, and committed their lives to the country.

Talbot was one of those.

His lifelong slog of building up the church in a trying and tumultuous religious marketplace crowded with 'Anabaptists Quakers & Rantors & Cantors' caused him to doubt whether the hierarchy at home would ever grasp the reality of life in the American plantations. At first it annoyed him, then it angered him, and finally it drove him to something close to despair. His nonjuring consecration was an act of desperation.

Talbot was pure of heart and often too guileless for his own good, playing easily into the hands of clever power brokers. If he could sometimes manipulate facts in a complex and casuistic way, it was the result of his being true to his own sense of integrity and his own canon of loyalty.

He was loved by his many friends and feared by those few who were his enemies. He could be generous to a fault. He was cracking good company and he wrote letters whose words still sparkle with wit and warmth after 300 years. He had a robust sense of humour and a fondness for puns. And he must have been a damned good rider.

Measured by any normal scale of achievement, Talbot's life was something of a failure. When he died, there was no bishop in America. There were one or two small parishes that he founded, a few sputtering others that he tended, and a scattering of prayer books, bibles, and altar vessels. There were no children and no estate, only an aged wife; some friends who would miss him; and a bishop who wouldn't.

Bishop Talbot's legacy, mysterious and hard to define, is his great heart, unbounded energy, love of the church, and passion for the gospel. In some indelible and strange way, long after his death, they shaped what the Episcopal Church in America would become.

He would have wanted no other legacy than that.

*Appendix 1: The genealogy of John Talbot*

## Appendix 2: The received biography of John Talbot

The first reference to Talbot occurs in George Keith's *A Journal of Travels from New-Hampshire to Caratuck, on the Continent of North America*, published in 1706. Keith makes no reference to Talbot's background, writing only of his service as a chaplain of the *Centurion* and praising his subsequent missionary work.

The earliest history of the SPG<sup>282</sup> mentions Talbot's laudatory service as a missionary until his dismissal for his refusal to pray for the king and the royal family. Humphreys includes no biographical information.

Early parish records witness to various John Talbots holding cures in Norfolk or Suffolk within the appropriate time frame. Equally confusing, Venn's *Alumni of Cambridge University* lists numerous Talbots (or Talbotts) and several identical John Talbot[t]s of the correct *floruit*, many of whom were in holy orders, all of whom were graduates of one college or another at Cambridge.

The tangle of sources led industrious nineteenth-century correspondents to attempt to puzzle out Talbot connections. Several issues of the London-based *Notes and Queries* reflect sober and scholarly contributions building on slim evidence from Norfolk and developing imaginative biographies for Talbot, true as well in *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, based on his associations in that county.

The industrious George Morgan Hills, Talbot's much later successor rector at St Mary's Church in Burlington, despite painstaking research in the 1870s, could not compile an accurate biography,<sup>283</sup> as the sources available to him at the time were equally confused. Hills' *History of the Church in Burlington* (1876 and 1885) and *John Talbot, the First Bishop in North America* (1879) include erroneous information or add to it.

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<sup>282</sup> David Humphreys, *An Historical account of the incorporated society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts . . . to the year 1728*, London 1730. (Published a little more than two years after Talbot died.)

<sup>283</sup> He laments in his 1879 monograph—*John Talbot, the First Bishop in North America*—that 'had I access to cartularies and archives in England, I could no doubt glean additional particulars respecting Bishop Talbot'. He was right.

Since 1880, all Talbot biographies have been based on Hills' work and all contain facts that do not correspond with known evidence. Here is a typical example:<sup>284</sup>

JOHN TALBOT, A.M., bapt. Wymondham, Norfolk co., England, 6 Nov. 1645, son of Thomas and Jane (Mede) Talbot; sizar, Christ's Coll., Cambridge, 17 Feb. 1659/60; A.B., 1663/64; Fellow of Peterhouse, 1664; A.M., 1671; Rector, Icklingham, St James, co. Suffolk, 1673–1689; settled over a church in Virginia, ca. 1690–1695; Rector of Fretherne, co. Gloucester, England, 1695–1701; Chaplain, H.M.S. "Centurion", 1702; came again to America, 24 Apr. 1702; 1st resident S.P.G. missionary in N.J., 1702–1704; settled Albany, N.Y., 1704–1704; Burlington, N.J., St Mary's church, 1704–1705, 1706–1724; Woodbridge, N.J., 1704–1705, 1707–1709; Perth Amboy, N.J., 1702–1704; Hopewell, N.J., 1705–1723 Elizabeth, N.J., 1707–1709; Bristol (Bucks) Pa., Church of St. James the Greater, 1712–1717; Philadelphia, Pa., Christ Church 1715–1715 supply, June 1724–1727, stated supply; nonjuror, consecrated Bishop with Dr Robert [sic] Welton; Ep.; d. Burlington, N.J., 29 Nov. 1727.

It was not until the early twentieth century that H. P. K. Skipton and Henry Broxap drew on previously untapped primary sources. Despite their careful scholarship<sup>285</sup> they both repeat erroneous biographical information from earlier works. Edgar Legare Pennington in the 1930s duplicated the same errors in what is considered an authoritative work<sup>286</sup> and those have carried down to scholarship of the current day.

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<sup>284</sup> Frederick Lewis Weis, *The colonial clergy of the middle colonies, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania 1628–1776*, American Antiquarian Society, 1957. To choose one instance of error from the text quoted: The actual rector of St James Church, Icklingham, Norfolk—indeed named John Talbot—died in 1689. There is a plaque to his ministry, noting the date of his death and his age, in the church still.

<sup>285</sup> H. P. K. Skipton, 'John Talbot, The First Bishop in America', *The East and the West: A Quarterly Review for the Study of Missions*, Vol. xix, 226–244 (1921). Henry Broxap's *The Later Non-Jurors* (Cambridge 1924) remains a standard-bearer in that field of scholarship.

<sup>286</sup> Edgar Legare Pennington, *John Talbot: Apostle of New Jersey 1645 (sic)–1727*, Church Historical Society 1938.

*Appendix 3: Letters of John Talbot, 25 August and 7 September 1713*

Three letters were given to St Mary's parish in Burlington, New Jersey by the Reverend H. P. K. Skipton some time in 1921. During the preparation of his article 'John Talbot: First Bishop of America', Skipton had corresponded with the rector<sup>287</sup> and in the published article, he makes reference to having the Talbot–Nelson letters in his possession.<sup>288</sup> The two extant letters are transcribed below. (A letter of 13 March 1713 has been apparently lost.) The texts are broken into paragraphs for easier reading; the original letters are, aside from the date, salutation, and valediction, continuous text.

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Hon<sup>bl.</sup> Sir

Aug. 25 1713

This comes by the hand of our good Bro:<sup>r</sup> Mr Evans Rector of the Church at Philad<sup>a</sup> who I suppose is well known to Mr Nelson and the rest of the Hon<sup>ble.</sup> Soc<sup>y</sup>. I need not say much in his commendation tho' he has been very diligent & done a great deal of service for the Church both in the Town and County especially amongst his country men the poor Welch who are like to be lost now for lack of looking after, for there is nobody but Quakers that understand their language so they are like to be a prey to those hereticks who have damaged the faith and are worse than Infidels.

Dr Innes<sup>289</sup> is Dead & has Left three towns Shrewsbury Middletown & Free-

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<sup>287</sup> A letter from John Talbot Ward (no relation to John Talbot), rector of St Mary's Church, to Skipton, dated 1921, is in the British Library. (Add. Mss 45511 fol. 183) Once the article was published, he donated the letters to the place where they had been written.

<sup>288</sup> The remainder of the nonjuring materials Skipton possessed (obtained from C. F. Secretan, the biographer of Robert Nelson) he donated to the British Library, where they are catalogued Add. Mss 45511 and 45512.

<sup>289</sup> Alexander Innes, MA (King's College, Aberdeen University), ordained in the Scottish Episcopal Church, was first a preacher on *HMS Forfight* in 1677 (Subscription Evidence Record 79913, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009) and then was appointed by the bishop of London in 1686 as chaplain of the troops at New York (Subscription

hold, to be overrun by Anabaptists Quakers & Rantors & Cantors of all sects. They have taken the Book & plate given by the Society from the Minister of Amboy<sup>290</sup> because they did not like a Churchwarden he chose last Easter and when he made his Complaint to the Gov.<sup>r</sup> at N. York<sup>291</sup> he could have no redress. Gallio cared for none of these things.<sup>292</sup>

Mr Haliday<sup>293</sup> would have come home to complain to the Society, but since so great harvest & so few hands I perswaded him to stay at Piscataway Maidenhead & Hopewell &c. & lay his cause before the Society by the hand of Mr Evans who was coming home, & whom we have always found faithfully to use his Interest both abroad & at home for the good of the Church. 'tis not safe to speak or write but I will say this to a person of honour that I can trust & will make no ill use of it. That we have not an Englishman's place or [are?] hardly in peace when there is a S\_\_\_\_\_man<sup>294</sup> to disturb us.

Poor Shir: Goodman & Bro:<sup>r</sup> Brook were sent away by their means. Poor Bro:<sup>r</sup> Philipps is now under persecution [from?] Lying & Slandering Affidavit men. Bro:<sup>r</sup> Vesey & his church are in great distress & I expect the same when the cunning hunter<sup>295</sup> comes amongst us.

But for my Part I am resolved to see the out side on't, tho' I believe there never was a Church in the world in such a Case, all God's hand upon us presbyters who have no Deacon to assist no Bishop to direct or protect us, & they Love the Queen as they do the Church, leave all in the Lurch for now, there is but one Xtian in the Council for the province of West Jersey. But those things

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Evidence Record 82473, CCEd, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 20 August 2009). A nonjuror, Innes retired to New Jersey and lived a quiet life, much admired for his diligence and piety. The most complete biography of him is found in Nelson Burr, *The Anglican Church in New Jersey*, Princeton, 1939, 616.

<sup>290</sup> The Reverend Edward Vaughan at this time.

<sup>291</sup> Robert Hunter, governor of New York and New Jersey since 1710.

<sup>292</sup> Acts 18:17

<sup>293</sup> Thomas Haliday later became a fairly loathsome character and a violent alcoholic, whom Talbot and other clergy had to force out through letters, reports, and depositions to the SPG. There is a brief biography of him in Burr's *The Anglican Church in New Jersey*, 607.

<sup>294</sup> The underscore is in the original. A reference to Robert Hunter, who was a Scot by birth.

<sup>295</sup> A play on Robert Hunter's name. Talbot made double entendres occasionally in his letters.



are too tedious & grievous to me to write.

Therefore pray for all to my good Bro:<sup>r</sup> Evans who knows all I say to be true & much more to be true, therefore I say I refer the rest to him, desiring you to give him all the Credit & Countenance that you can wi<sup>h</sup> the Hon.<sup>ble</sup> Society, especially with my Lord Clarendon who knows what I say of those whigs to be true for he has suffered his share of Calumny & reproach from them as well as we.

Blessed be God Col. Nicholson is coming over whom we know to be a just man, a faithful friend of the Church & Crown. I shall not further trouble you by taking up your precious minutes, only crave an interest in your prayers & remain

Hon.<sup>ble</sup> Sir  
Yor highly oblig'd  
& faithfull humble Serv<sup>t</sup>  
John Talbot

To  
Robert Nelson Esq<sup>c</sup>  
one of the Hon.<sup>ble</sup> Members of the  
Society for Propagating the  
Gospel in Foreign Parts  
at  
Ormond Street

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Hon'd Sir

Burlington Sept 7 1713

This comes by my countryman Mr Keeble<sup>296</sup> who is very diligent in business but you know the race is not to the swift &c. but how it came to miscarry now I leave to Mr Samuel Clowes<sup>297</sup> whose testimony I dare say is true, for I know him to be an honest ingenious man as any I know in these parts, he's

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<sup>296</sup> This is unlikely to have been Thomas Keeble, the schoolmaster on Long Island appointed in 1727; there is no evidence that Keeble was in America before that time. No other person has been identified as a likely candidate.

<sup>297</sup> Samuel Clowes (1674–1760) was a lawyer, a surveyor, and one of the founders of the Grace Church parish at Jamaica, New York. He was deeply involved in the tedious Poyer case.

also a good churchman & the best friend that poor Brot. Poyer has in all his parish.

I have troubled y<sup>r</sup> Hon<sup>s</sup>. with a Long Complaint of our miserable state by Brot. Evans. If he Returns again I wish the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Society would send him Missionaries ad Libitum inter Wallos in Pensylvania. They are many & I know nobody that would take the pains, he's so well Acquainted with them and their Language. He would do more good there than all that have been sent amongst the barbarians Canabals the Mohocks &c.

No doubt tis very tedious & to us & to you to be always Complaining but you can expect nothing else from us till we have a B<sup>p</sup>. We have just now heard of the Death of my L<sup>d</sup> of London, the fall of that pillar makes a great Vacancy in the C<sup>h</sup>: w<sup>ch</sup> I hope will be well supplied, but we shall do little the better unless we have an overseer of our own, for I dare be bold to say no man can know good or evil, right or wrong by all that laid before them from these parts of the world & no man should be condemned till he be heard.

Since the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Society have been at the charge to purchase a house & Land for the use of a B<sup>p</sup> we can't think it will be long before they send one over. They must not depend on Secular Gov<sup>ts</sup> w<sup>h</sup> care for none of these things. We never saw our Gov<sup>r</sup> but once these three years, then he came to get money & we never saw that nor him since in this province of West Jersey.

My L<sup>d</sup> of London<sup>298</sup> was a good man in the Island but in the main he was very hard upon us poor presbyters. I believe he was the first prelate that ever pretended to propagate the Gospell or plant a church without B<sup>p</sup> or deacon. I don't say he took too much upon him, but sure he bound heavy burdens upon us w<sup>h</sup> he did not see with one of his eyes nor touch with one of his fingers.

For my part I am almost spent & should be glad to be superseded by any honest English man that the Society should think fit to appoint, for I had rather stay till I dye then any of the [*illegible*] men born of whiggs should take my place & ruin the church w<sup>h</sup> I have ventured my life to raise here in the Wilderness, w<sup>h</sup> I hope God who has begun this good work will prosper to the end & the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

I leave the rest to honest ffriend Mr Keble who has been thro' all parts &

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<sup>298</sup> Henry Compton, born in 1632, was bishop of London from 1675 until his death on 7 July 1713.

knows our affairs & how we do & what we suffer as well as any body. So I pray  
God bless you all our Benefactors & desiring y<sup>r</sup> prayers I remain

Hon<sup>ble</sup> Sir

Your most obliged

humble Ser<sup>t</sup> John Talbot

To Robert Nelson Esq  
at his house  
Ormond Street  
London

*Endorsed by Nelson*

Sept 7<sup>th</sup> 1713 from

Burlington

Mr Talbot

ans: 19 May 1714<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Nelson died a little more than eight months later, on 15 January 1714/15. His reply to Talbot did not survive.

